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57th year of publication

Treaty referendum resolves little

Alan Doerksen

VANCOUVER – While Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is predictably critical of the results of the recent B.C. referendum on native issues, other Christian and other political observers in B.C. are showing cautious support for the government's approach, and have seen the referendum as an opportunity to educate the public about native issues.

Only 35 per cent voted

In early July, the B.C. government released results of the May referendum. Each of the eight questions asked received 85 per cent or more votes in favor of the government's position, but only 35 per cent of registered voters actually voted, reports Elections B.C.

Here are some of the questions and voting results:

- Private property should not be expropriated for treaty settlements – 85 per cent in favor;
- Hunting, fishing and recreational opportunities on Crown land should be ensured for all British Columbians – 93 per cent;
- Parks and protected area should be maintained for the use and benefit of all British Columbians – 95 per cent;
- Aboriginal self-government should have the characteristics of local government, with powers delegated from Canada and B.C. — 87 per cent;
- Existing tax exemptions for aboriginal people should be phased out – 91 per cent.

B.C. GOVERNMENT WEBSITE PHOTO

B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell (left) and Nisga'a Lisims president Joe Gosnell (right) share a meal during Campbell's first visit to Nisga'a lands.

The government reported more than seven per cent of respondents registered spoiled ballots, while native leaders say more than 40,000 British Columbians sent their ballots to them to protest the vote.

Critics of the referendum have pointed out that much of it is like asking people to vote for motherhood and apple pie. Who's going to vote against keeping public parks for everyone and requiring everyone to pay a fair share of taxes?

'Incredible milestone'

Gordon Campbell, the Premier, has called the referendum "an incredible milestone," reports the *National Post*. Campbell said his government has been given an overwhelming mandate to "get on with the task" and enter a "new era of reconciliation with First Nations.... After many years of being shut out of the treaty process, the people of our province have sent a resounding message to First Nations and to Canadians alike that we are committed to pursuing the negotiation of treaties that are affordable, that are workable, that

See **AFTER** *page 2...*

New immigration law punishes people smugglers

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA – Canada's new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) steps up security measures designed to punish people smugglers, and make attempts to stop the "revolving door syndrome," in which refugees make repeat claims to status in Canada. Agencies that work with refugees are pleased with tougher security rules, but are concerned that some refugees will be shut out of Canada because of some regulations.

COURTESY THE LIGHTHOUSE

Samia Saad of the Lighthouse.

Faster but fair system

According to Immigration Canada, "Canadians want an immigration and refugee system and legislation that are faster but remain fair. They want legislation that strikes a balance between Canada's tradition of protecting refugees and welcoming immigrants and dealing firmly with those who would abuse our systems and processes." The new act "will give Canada the tools to say 'no' more quickly, in order to remove serious criminals, and to say 'yes' more often to the immigrants and refugees it needs to continue to grow."

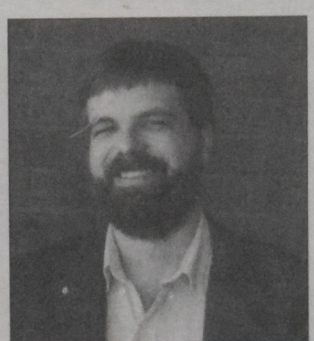
Clamping down on people smugglers is one key focus of the new act. This is reflected in new rules about inadmissibility classes, which include:

- broadened organized crime provisions which include persons engaging in transnational people smuggling, trafficking in persons, and money laundering;
- a new misrepresentation inadmissibility class, which includes sponsors or foreign nationals who make a misrepresentation or withhold information on a relevant matter that could cause an error in the administration of the law. Under the previous law, foreign nationals whose visa application is refused for misrepresentation could immediately submit another application. Now they must wait two years before applying again.

The new act also features higher maximum penalties for smuggling offences. Persons involved in smuggling less than 10 persons could receive stiffer sentences (10 years imprisonment instead of five, $500,000 fine instead of $100,000). Subsequent convictions would be punishable by up to 14 years in prison and a $1 million fine.

Tough measures approved

Samia Saad, a program co-ordinator and Hispanic counselor with the Lighthouse (a Toronto-based Christian Reformed outreach to refugees and newcomers), approves of these tough new measures for people smugglers. Refugees wanting to come to Canada sometimes "fall into the hands of people who will really exploit them," says Saad. But she warns, "there's not really good provision for people who are being exploited."



CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

Harry Kits of CPJ.

Harry Kits, executive director of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), comments, "some of the rules around security reviews are focused on harshness for everybody. It's a broad-strokes approach, rather than a hard line." But he describes strong penalties for people-smugglers as "a positive thing." He adds, "We're in favor of removing terrorists. The difficulty we have is with definitions of terrorists. Who is a terrorist is not defined in the act."

Using false documents

The Immigration and Refugee Board is required to take into account a refugee claimant's lack of identification when assessing credibility. But despite the new misrepresentation rules, refugees will be exempt from prosecution for misrepresentation and use of false documentation because, as the act states, "Genuine refugees often have to resort to the use of false documents."

Saad observes that refugees "sometimes change their identity because of persecution." Other refugees have been abused, and "don't want to say what happened — so they tell another story," explains Saad. But often later on, these refugees tell their real story to immigration workers. Such refugees have experienced trauma and "have to have specific time to process trauma," explains Saad,

See **REFUGEE** *page 3...*

News

After referendum, B.C. faces challenges with treaty negotiations

... *continued from page 1*

create certainty, finality and equality."

In a speech to the B.C. legislature, Campbell said that the guidance and direction British Columbians have given their provincial negotiators on each point is "crystal clear."

"So now it's up to us — to the people's elected representatives — to use that mandate to reinvigorate the treaty process and redouble our efforts to get results. That is my aim — and that is my government's commitment."

Campbell also assured native leaders that his government will not delay another 10 or 20 years but will move forward more swiftly to settle outstanding negotiations at the treaty table — but on the basis of the referendum's mandate.

Just one B.C. treaty signed

After 10 years and half a billion dollars spent on trying to negotiate treaties across the province, not a single one has been signed. Only the Nisga'a treaty stands as a modern-day treaty in British Columbia, but it was negotiated outside the current process, reports the *Post*.

However, the Campbell government – including the premier, himself — has been in dialogue with various native groups during the year since it gained power.

In response to the referendum, Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) has called on the B.C. government "to engage in full and fair treaty negotiations with Aboriginal people." It interpreted the results as a rejection of the referendum: "Altogether, almost 75 per cent of B.C. voters either boycotted or registered a no vote in the treaty referendum," declares CPJ on its website. This, of course, interprets any failure to vote or apathy as a no vote.

It argued that the referendum on treaty negotiations was an attempt to undermine the rights of the aboriginal people to obtain a properly negotiated treaty.

CPJ adds: "Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, warns of the social and economic uncertainty that could result if the rights of Aboriginal people are not respected. This ill will and social tension can be avoided by free and fair negotiation. "

Donna Stewart, a member of CPJ's national board who lives in North Vancouver, observes the B.C. government received "hardly the overwhelming support the premier was looking for. Church people made a difference. They didn't send in ballots, or sent them to aboriginal groups.... It's clear that the majority doesn't support this."

CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

Nick Loenen, of Fair Voting B.C.

But she adds, "There was some hostility from people of faith who didn't think churches or CPJ had anything to say on this."

Why so quiet?

She notes that federal Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault has spoken against the referendum and its results. "I had written to him saying, 'Why are you so quiet?'" Nault wrote back to tell her he opposed the referendum process.

Recently, Nault told CBC News Online that the Supreme Court has ruled that native self-government is an inherent right, and it can't be delegated by Ottawa or individual provinces.

Among other things, the province proposes recognizing First Nations with municipal-style governments only. But Nault responds, "We don't believe that municipal-style type government for First Nations is on," Nault said. "We were down that road many years ago, and it's not been effective, nor will it work."

Stewart asserts that the referendum's results "will make negotiation more difficult." Some native chiefs have said "there's nothing to negotiate," reports Stewart. "I don't think this has been at all helpful. It's been a hostile tactic."

Stewart also criticizes the B.C. government for cutting funds to regional advisory committees, which are "a mechanism for local interests to have a voice" in treaty negotiations. She sees the government as contradicting itself by asking for public input in the referendum, but also restricting public input by cutting funds to those committees.

But Stewart sees one positive aspect to the referendum: "There was a lot of dialogue. We're all better informed than we were before this."

B.C. has different history

Nick Loenen, of Fair Voting B.C. in Richmond, says the number of people who voted in the referendum is "not too bad, but obviously it would have been better with a bigger participation rate." But predictably, the government has said the turnout was reasonable he observes.

"I'm supportive of the idea of referenda on certain issues. [But] this is probably the worst kind of issue to put to a referendum." He describes it as "an attempt to build a referendum around a particular point of view. A lot of people would find some fault with it."

B.C. is different from other provinces in having had few treaty negotiations at all with Indians, observes Loenen. "Very little of the province has been subject to treaty negotiations. We're still at Square One.... You have to judge this all in terms of history....

"The real conundrum is we don't have consensus over how to resolve these issues," says Loenen. "I have a certain amount of sympathy with the government" for trying to build a consensus. People who claimed the referendum could diminish native's constitutional rights made "an empty claim," he asserts. The referendum debate "has focused some of the issues."

Loenen is critical of B.C.'s treaty negotiations. "The treaty process has gone nowhere," he says. He claims there is no incentive for natives to sign treaties. "In the meantime, they're not being deprived of anything."

"All attempts to give special considerations to native people have failed," contends Loenen. "I'm beginning to have sympathy with people who say natives should be treated like all Canadians.... We're perpetuating a dependency on handouts. There is no incentive for native people to become self-reliant."

Feds are real stumbling block

Gordon Gibson, The Fraser Institute's senior fellow in Canadian Studies, has a different take on the referendum results. He told CC: "The thing to understand is that the referendum never was about the bargaining stance of the government, and all insiders know that. It was about politics, in the admirable sense of giving British Columbians something they had never had a chance at before, namely, expressing their views on one of the most controversial issues in this province. The referendum did that, and had the additional highly useful effect of public education in a very complex area.

"A year or two from now, the referendum will be forgotten. Deals will be made (or not) depending upon agreement between each and every one of the three parties at the table. Again, all insiders know that the real stumbling block in the system is the feds, and of course, they are also responsible for the problems over the past 135 years. This B.C. government was always going to take the position of no third order of government [i.e., native self-government] and no tax exemptions. The native side of the table was always going to say more land, more cash, and third order. The referendum has changed nothing. The responses by all sides reflect their political positioning, not underlying realities." The Fraser Institute is a conservative Canadian economic and social research and educational "think-tank" based in Vancouver.

B.C. natives condemn referendum results

Alan Doerksen

VANCOUVER – Although the B.C. government claims to have majority support among B.C. voters for its position on native treaty negotiations, native groups are critical of the results, and some are threatening to walk away from the negotiating table.

Definitely disappointing

"I can't say I'm devastated or all that surprised, but it's definitely disappointing," Judith Sayers, Chief of the Hupacasath First Nations, told the *Post*. "They're happy that they got what they want, but they're not going to think the same thing six months from now when the province is in chaos and economics keep going down the tubes. Negotiators are not going to have any room to move at the table," she asserted. "Premier Campbell and [Attorney-General] Geoff Plant aren't on the same planet as we are."

Not closing the door

Herb George, an executive member of the First Nations summit, an organization representing more than 40 Indian bands involved in treaty negotiations, said the success of future treaty negotiations will depend on how the premier chooses to interpret the results of the referendum. "We're not closing the door just because we have results; we're going to wait and see how this translates into leadership. But the bottom line is that for First Nations in the treaty process, if the inherent right to self-government is not at the table, neither are we," he said. Native insistence on self-government will have economic consequences for the province, affecting the investment climate and land uses, he said. "You cannot have economic certainty . . . unless we give it to you."

UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS PHOTO

Judith Sayers, Chief of the Hupacasath First Nations, speaks to reporters.

To the surprise of B.C. native leaders, Attorney General Geoff Plant has said the eight principles laid out in the referendum will likely apply to every treaty negotiation. There will be no distinction between those native bands negotiating within the B.C. Treaty Process and those outside the process.

Kamloops Indian Band Chief Bonnie Leonard called the move a "fraudulent misrepresentation" by the B.C. government. "We were told all along the referendum wouldn't affect bands in the Interior not in the process. After the fact, he changes his mind?" said Leonard.

There are just over 40 negotiating tables active under the B.C. Treaty Commission, reports the Victoria *Times-Colonist*. One-third of the First Nations in B.C. are not participating in the process. But they also have rights and titles, and the government has started a process to negotiate with them.

News/Politics

Refugee process should be speeded up by new immigration law

... *continued from page 1*

who sometimes goes with clients to refugee hearings. Many refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, she observes. The new law, however, will not allow refugees to make a second claim for refugee status.

Kits says that the new law asks refugees to provide a declaration explaining their identity. And although the new law gets rid of the need for identity documents, "the identity requirement remains in the regulations" of the Immigration Department. "Our focus has really been on identity documents."

Regarding refugees, "our concern has always been on the limbo issue," says Kits, referring to the long waiting period refugees must face as their claims are processed. The new law actually mentions that issue, and Kits says, "We're pleased with that." He believes CPJ had some direct influences on the law.

No repeat refugee claims

Currently anyone claiming refugee status can make another claim in 90 days if he leaves Canada and returns. So some who have been refused keep entering new claims again and again even though they have no new facts to submit. This has led to abuses and the resulting situation has been characterized by one Federal Court judge as a "revolving door in and out of Canada."

The new act does not permit second refugee claims, but allows for a risk assessment if they return to Canada six months after departing Canada. This will enable Canada to stop the revolving door syndrome while still providing a reasonable time period to account for changed country conditions or personal circumstances.

The act also calls for a faster and fair inland process for refugees. Long delays mean people in real need of protection are kept in limbo waiting to hear if they can remain in Canada and be reunited with their families.

The new act also promises to be tougher in making sure people given a removal order are made to leave the country immediately.

Saad sees some positive aspects in the new law. She believes it will help refugees get through the system faster. The system for sponsoring refugees will be "more accessible to everybody" - including businesses, as well as churches. "The process will be faster.... I think it's a good thing," she says. "Sometimes we've been waiting for years and years before a refugee can come" to Canada.

But she cautions, "The concerns that many people have is: less people will be eligible" to apply for refugee status. "The numbers are going to decrease.... It will work better for the fewer." But meanwhile, the number of refugees worldwide has increased, she notes.

Immigration law seeks 'best and brightest'

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — Ottawa's new Immigration Act focuses on attracting "the best and the brightest" immigrants to Canada – something some refugee advocacy agencies criticize.

In order to attract "the best and the brightest", the new act will no longer give preference simply on the basis of occupation but will instead "focus more on choosing skilled workers with the flexible and transferable skill sets required to succeed in a fast changing, knowledge-based economy."

The act explains: "the Canadian economy values skilled technical workers and tradespersons with good human capital attributes as well as university educated professionals."

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

A new citizen is welcomed to Canada.

Leaving poor countries poorer

However, observes Saad, a program co-ordinator and Hispanic counselor with the Lighthouse (a Toronto-based Christian Reformed outreach to refugees and newcomers), "With family sponsorship, the emphasis is more on bringing professionals to Canada." She sees this as "unethical, because we're taking away professionals from other countries — leaving the countries without the professionals.... My concern is most of those people come from poorer countries."

Harry Kits, executive director of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), agrees with Saad, asking, "Do we want to be attracting the best and brightest from countries that can't afford to lose them?"

However, some think the new law will make it more difficult for some skilled people to immigrate to Canada.

"We are competing for high-tech and specialized manufacturing jobs — exactly where the labor squeeze exists," Nancy Hughes Anthony, president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, told the *National Post* recently. "What are we putting out there as enticements to come to Canada? If the system is long, cumbersome and uncertain, we aren't going to win."

Barriers to immigration

One of the main barriers, says the *National Post*, is the new focus on applicants having some connection to Canada, either through a job offer, prior work experience in Canada or family members already residing in the country. Citizenship and Immigration Canada says they are based on research that shows new immigrants with family or pre-arranged employment were better able to make a successful start in Canada.

However, according to Ben Trister, chair of the immigration committee for the Canadian Bar Association, the emphasis put on a job offer creates an incentive for fraud. He said advertisements by "immigration consultants" have begun appearing in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan offering to issue job offers for $1,500.

The new, more stringent point system (for work experience, education and skills) could make it more difficult to reach federal government targets of 300,000 new immigrants a year. It would make a U.S. University-trained engineer ineligible to immigrate, he said, while educational requirements for skilled tradespeople remain impossibly high, reports the *Post*.

"The new rules are going to make Canada a lot less competitive than we are now," said Trister. "It puts us in a worse position than before, just when other countries are opening up."

However, counters Susan Scarlett, spokeswoman for Citizenship and Immigration, such charges that the reforms will make Canada less competitive are "nonsense."

Before, skilled workers were limited to some 340 occupations. The new rules will look at "flexible skill sets," she said, while the bias toward professionals has been removed, with a bachelor's degree now considered equivalent to a two-year trade diploma.

New African Union rises from collapse of the old

Harry der Nederlanden

DURBAN, South Africa — More than 30 African leaders gathered July 9 in Durban, South Africa to end the Organization of African Union (OAU) and replace it with a more powerful one, an African Union that, they say, will usher in a new era.

The OAU was formed 39 years ago to lead Africa out from under white colonial rule, but it has done little or nothing to liberate Africans from black dictatorial rule.

Keeping despots in power

Of it David Coltart, a member of Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change, said, "It appears as if its primary goal has been to maintain despots in power. It's extremely difficult to identify any remarkable successes."

A Canadian Press (CP) article, recounting the history of the OAU, says it did nothing to stop dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko of the former Zaire from oppressing his people and looting his country, or to halt Rwanda's genocide.

Just a few weeks ago, OAU also praised Zimbabwe's presidential elections as "transparent, credible, free and fair," even though police used tear gas to drive thousands of voters away from the polls and ruling party militants kidnaped hundreds of opposition poll watchers.

The OAU has "frustrated the advancement of human rights on the continent," Coltart said. "It persistently used the principle of noninterference to allow very grave human rights violations to go on completely unchecked."

The new African Union requires its members to make commitments to democratic principles and to respect human rights. It will have the right to intervene with member states in cases of genocide, war crimes or gross violations of human rights. Members must promise to hold free elections and allow opposition parties to campaign freely.

"As envisioned," says CP, "the African Union — the continent's second attempt to achieve economic and political unity — will have a Parliament, a security council and a standby peacekeeping force. African leaders hope it will be far stronger, more principled and unwilling to accept the abuses ignored by the OAU."

President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa said in his opening address, "Our peoples need democracy, good governance, the eradication of corruption, human rights, peace and stability."

Rachel Swarns, wrote in the *New York Times* that even as Mbeki spoke, "the gaping divide between democrats and autocrats was painfully evident. Mbeki shared the stage with Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, who has yet to hold elections during his more than 30 years in power."

She also said there was no discussion about Zimbabwe, Eritrea or Swaziland, "where journalists, government critics and opposition party leaders have been detained and threatened in recent months."

In the past, Gadhafi has paid $3.5 million to cover OAU membership dues for 11 countries. He also has assisted struggling African countries, bailing out Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe when his country was suffering a severe fuel shortage.

According to the *New York Times,* the members agreed to include Libya and Kenya as members of the steering committee for the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), strongly promoted by Chretien at the recent G8 summit. NEPAD is a program, in which democratic, well-managed states are to be rewarded with foreign aid and investment by the major industrialized nations. African worried that the prominence of Libya will make foreign donors uneasy.

"It undermines their credibility, particularly in the minds of the G-8," said Jakkie Cilliers, a delegate who runs the Institute of Security Studies in Pretoria.

Editorial

Christian Courier is on the move

Harry der Nederlanden

This past week, my hand has become as familiar with a paint brush as with a pen. *Christian Courier* is moving into new offices. Our present offices have long been too large for us, so to save a little on rent we began to look around and finally found something that will accommodate us for half the cost.

We chose something that we all said we could move into "without doing anything to it." Ha! That was before Rose and Ineke began walking about from room to room, gazing at the ceilings, studying the walls, the floors, the doors, the exterior. I managed to prevent them from climbing on the roof. But even though it was all ready to move into, I've been prying, hammering, painting, hauling bricks and climbing up and down ladders, muttering under my breath.

We're going to have a big sale. Desks, filing cabinets, shelves, tables, room dividers – we have all sorts of surplus. Too bad it isn't worth very much. From the proceeds I'd like to buy a new computer. But Rose and Ineke have been looking at wallpaper and curtains.

When you move, you discover how much stuff you've been saving for no good reason. I've hauled enough paper trash to the recycling depot to supply newsprint for an entire edition of the *Globe and Mail*. Pleasant thought.

Last year I already stayed after work to clean out filing cabinets stuffed with papers from all my predecessors. Clipped articles and pamphlets for stories people worked on 10 or 20 years ago. Thick folders crammed with carbon copies of letters Bert wrote to writers, encouraging them, arguing with them, cultivating them. He was as much a teacher as an editor. Boxes of notes and rough drafts of hundreds of stories Marian wrote over the years. Financial records and copies of bills going back more than twenty years. Stan saved everything except old Kleenexes.

Those stories never become trash

I feel a little arrogant tossing it all out. As if I'm overruling the wisdom of my predecessors. But not everything old becomes a precious antique or a historical resource. Most of it just turns into trash.

Our archives are, of course, moving with us. You'd be surprised how heavy 50-plus years of news reporting and discussion gets to be. As I moved them, I thought these boxes hold a lot of stories of faithful people becoming part of the story of this huge country. But they're not isolated stories of individuals; they're the stories of a community that holds onto one another and seeks to shape one another into an image of something, of Someone, larger than the whole. They are also a record of God's faithfulness. Those stories never become trash.

Without the words shared in CC (and similar periodicals and books), we would be much, much less of a community.

So I treat all this stuff we're moving and recycling with care, with respect. It stands for the good work of a lot of good people.

None of the writers and editors who contributed to CC made a lot of money doing it; they did it out of faith, which is a gift of God. They did it because they were committed to a vision, a vision that is kept alive by communicating it, by sharing our different glimpses of it, by quarreling about it, by reflecting on where we've been and where we're going, by grieving together, by celebrating together, by weaving all our stories into one story, into his story. CC was never just a platform for a talented few; it sought to open itself to as many voices and stories as possible.

We're in the black

Our present move doesn't symbolize a drop in CC's fortunes. Last year for the first time in the 20 years or so that I've been associated with CC (joining its advisory board shortly after moving to St. Catharines in 1978), we operated in the black. That doesn't mean we're debt-free, of course, because we owe all our subscribers a year's worth of stories. So we're always in debt to our subscribers.

It is true, however, that a much smaller percentage of "our" community subscribes to CC than 25 years ago. The slow loss of readers was the first topic of discussion at the first meeting of the advisory board I attended about 20 years ago. And we've never been able to reverse that trend. Many magazines have, of course, suffered declining readerships, not just CC and the *Banner*. *Time, Newsweek, Maclean's* – the list goes on and on. You don't escape the trend by using glossy paper and brilliant color and expert designers. Greater "professionalism" is not the answer.

On the contrary, the Internet has flourished because it is not just the domain of professional writers. There are thousands and thousands of discussion groups where anyone with a keyboard and an opinion can have his or her say. Some enthusiasts of the Internet predicted that soon newspapers, magazines and books would be obsolete.

Online CC offers opportunity for input

But the novelty of the medium is already wearing off and people are spending less not more time on the internet. It is, after all, easier to sit at the kitchen table or in your easy chair with a newspaper or book than with a computer. And you can't toss a computer across the room and say, "Here, honey, this is interesting; you should read it."

Now that CC is online, we hope that it will be easier for our readers to share their opinions and insights with us. We also hope to encourage younger generations to begin writing for and reading CC. The only way to keep a community vital and vibrant is to keep as many as possible engaged in renewing and reshaping its vision. That's true for specific Christian institutions such as our churches, schools and colleges, but it is also true for our overall vision of the Christian life and of our place in this world.

A worldview is not something you learn in grade school and then you can put it in your wallet. It's something that needs constant nurture, renewal, sharing and updating.

There are, of course, many ways this is done, many different publications and agencies.

In fact, nowadays nearly every Christian cause and agency produces its own newsletter as part of its promotion and fund-raising. Although this is inevitable, there are drawbacks as well. There's a balkanization of the Kingdom vision into a host of little kingdoms. Because news about all these different fronts on which Christians are engaged become associated with fundraising for different agencies and organizations, we lose sight of the larger vision of which they are part. In fact, we tend to treat them a bit like the advertising that overflows our mailboxes. We know they're "good causes" but we get a little tired of being tapped, and many of us don't even bother to read the often very good stories associated with them.

As editor of CC, I often find it easier to get stories about the work of various evangelical agencies, Baptist mission projects, relief efforts of the Mennonite Central Committee and even outreach by the Catholic Church than to get stories about work being done by the CRC. They tend to become the property of the various agencies because they are as much used to get support as to inform. This is not a healthy state of affairs. People seldom get a comprehensive view of the Kingdom and the work done in its name.

I'm not faulting those seeking support for various organizations and agencies; after all, they know neither the *Banner* nor CC reaches every household in the CRC, so they need to do their own mailings. And in the final analysis it is the job of CC to generate a well-rounded variety of stories that bring into our purview the many dimensions of Kingdom work and many places the Spirit is at work in the lives of men and women, which is quite simply everywhere.

And it is a privilege to be able to play some modest role in bringing you those stories.

This is our prayer at CC: establish the work of our hands, Lord, and enable us to celebrate the works done in your name.

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Letters

If it ain't broke don't fix it

There is an old piece of practical wisdom which says: "If it ain't broke don't fix it." That could be applied with benefit to the relationship of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America.

Contrary to a report in the *Grand Rapids Press* about these two churches being bitterly divided, they are indeed, getting along very well with each other and are quite sympathetic with each other in the struggle with today's problems. That they share a common heritage and are very much alike is not to be denied.

That is a long way from making them "the same." The realities that make them alike could be used to bolster the argument that they should never have split. That they should join and become one is not so easily established by pointing to their similarities. But it does make good headlines and it makes synodical delegates feel good when they can declare that there is "no difference in the two churches" and that there are "no reasons for separate existence." You even get your name in the paper!

Union could double our trouble

There is a good reason for arguing that they should not unite. That reason is to preserve the peace they enjoy. Just imagine the power plays and howls that would rise up if we ever got really serious about joining what is represented by 75 Riverside Drive in New York City and 2850 Kalamazoo in Grand Rapids. And what would the RCA do with the CRC Church Order which mandates the support of good Christian Schools? Would the CRC negotiators just toss that item into limbo?

And what benefits would accrue to either church if, added to its present problems, it would inherit a whole spate of new ones from the other denomination. It would essentially double our trouble. And could we look expectantly to our "leaders" to step up and bring resolution to those problems? Seriously? And what would we do with all those who don't see the rationale for this stride in the direction of uniformity? Might we end up with three churches instead of two?

We'd surely increase the flow of members to the other churches in the community always looking to recycle the saints. For there is no way we could stem the attrition that would follow an attempt to join these two churches. And neither church can afford any more attrition.

And that is not yet to have considered the price tag involved in a serious job of negotiating a church union. Co-operation, joint ministries and attitudinal changes, yes! But that is far from union.

So please, don't try to "fix it."

Ty Hofman
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The growing beast: Apostasy

In response to "Conversing about conversion", CC, June3, unity is the catchword of the hour for the ecumenical movement taking place in North America and around the world. Therein lies what looks to be the heart that pulses within the growing beast known as Apostasy.

The world religious system from which springs the ecumenical avalanche currently crashing down upon Christianity (the CRC included) demands that we all just get along and that we accept all belief systems within Christianity as equally true and acceptable in the eyes of God.

Hielema says: "...that all major streams of religion can find a common ground."

But Scripture says: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." (Tim. 2:5)

What is Hielema trying to prove, being an elder in the CRC. Have the doctrines of the CRC changed?

P. Aalhuizen,
Burnaby, B.C.

Dandelions and contentment

Reading the ["Dandelion"] poem written in response to your writing made me think about deeper reasons. According to the Bible, God made nature (dandelions) before people. People have turned very self-serving and try to manipulate nature for their ways instead of adapting themselves to nature. By justifying our behavior under the label "progress" we are destroying nature.

God had a reason why He created it as is. As God's will can only be a guess at best in our perception. I have had many thoughts about it. Since we are only a speck of dust in God's creation, I like to appreciate the little things of his grace and have tried in my poetry. I enclose here two of them.

Dandelion.
She has the sunniest face
of all of nature's children.
She is the most appreciative.
No demands,
just a little crack between the rocks,
a space where nothing else will dwell,
she opens up her green, green leaves
to greet the sun, the sky and wind
with golden blooms so soft and bright
they make the most forgotten hearts
lift up their eyes and say:
Thank you, Lord, for sending me a smile.

Contentment.
How can you dislike
the suns' prettiest reflection?
It is the first bloom announcing spring
in all the oddest places.
Between foundation bricks of house
and smallest cracks in sidewalks,
her little seed has found
a bit of earth
to sink her roots
for holding blooms
— miniature sunshines —
so even the bent and elderly,
whose dreams of rainbows
and far sky blues have ceased,
can still send a smile to spring
by saying "hello"
to little dandelion.

Anna Plesums

News

Under the shadow of Pakistan's 'Black Laws'

Barbara G. Baker

The Pakistan government claims that international critics are unfair in allegations that the 1986 amendments to its harsh blasphemy laws target the country's religious minorities.

According to Interior Ministry statistics, nearly 75 per cent of the country's blasphemy cases registered every year implicate Muslim citizens. But except for a few prominent cases, most Muslim defendants are granted bail soon after their arrest, while judicial proceedings continue on their case.

By contrast, Christians charged with blasphemy are routinely refused bail by local judges, who justify their incarceration as "protection" from possible attacks while under trial. As a result, a Christian victimized by blasphemy charges typically spends years in jail until his verdict by a lower court, and years more while his probable conviction is being appealed to the higher courts. Once acquitted, as all have been to date, most flee the country for asylum abroad in order to escape ongoing extremist threats against their lives.

The bulk of blasphemy cases accusing minority citizens are filed against Ahmadi (Qadiani) members, a sect defined by Pakistan law as heretical and thus non-Muslim.

During 2001, human rights activists confirmed that at least 40 Muslims, 23 Ahmadis, 10 Christians and two Hindus were known to have been charged under Sections 295-A, -B or -C for committing alleged blasphemy against either Islam, the Quran or Mohammed.

For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send it by fax to: (905)-682-8313, or by e-mail to: editor@christian courier.ca

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Reflections on *'Conversing about conversion'*

(See Bert Hielema's article in CC, June 3, 2002)

Al J. Vanden Pol

Indeed, Bert (Hielema's) article "raises questions asked by many others within and without the church," as the Editor notes. And these are very important questions both for the faith of Christians themselves and the way they look at and relate to non-Christians.

By way of a running comment, allow me to contribute some of my struggling thoughts to a necessary discussion.

1. Bert calls his friend a real "*Mensch*" (Yiddish), a decent, kind, honest, good person, "fully human and fully humane" who "always acts with complete integrity".

I question, though, whether his Jewish friend will agree with that "always" of his integrity since Bert tells us that his friend also believes in total depravity. Yet, both the Old and the New Testament teach us that Yahweh attaches great value to "righteous" living, i.e. living in true whole-hearted love to Yahweh and to one's neighbor (see Psalm 1 and Matt. 25:31-46).

I believe with Bert that Jesus was in the first place *the* Mensch, the only *norm-al* person, the Only One who as a human being completely answered God's norm of what it meant to be human — *Mensch.*

'Son of Man' has deeper meaning

Where Bert, in my opinion, falls short is in stating that the term "Son of Man" literally means — nothing more than — to be fully human.

The term "Son of Man" has a much broader and deeper meaning than only that. See Dan.7:13,18; and the numerous references in the Gospel to Jesus as the Son of Man, like Matt. 9:6; 12:8,32; 12:40; 17:9; 24:27-44; John 6:27, 53, 62.

Then Bert raises a double question to which he says he has no definite answer. (Is he alone in this? I doubt it.) He asks: a) whether for a really righteous, humane person (*mensch*) who does not know Jesus, this desire to be "true *mensch*" is given to him by Jesus, and b) whether the way in which he is "*mensch*" is counted to him for righteousness.

To a) I would reply that the Word of Genesis 1 and John 1 who was from the beginning and who created all things good and beautiful has never stopped to be the True Light that enlightens every man (John 1:9) and still operates by his Spirit-presence everywhere and certainly becomes transparent in beautifully good people.

To b) I would be inclined to say: Why not leave that up to God? He alone will do the correct "counting" when the books are opened. And in my understanding, the Bible indicates that, in Jesus, Yahweh's final judgment is more than just "black and white"— an "egalitarian" heaven or a pitch black hell (See Dan. 12:2,3; Luke 12:41-49; Matt. Il:23,24).

Is salvation necessary?

But I sense that Bert wonders, since his friend "sees death's door," whether he must not help him to find the way to eternal life-after-death through Jesus the Messiah; whether that is also necessary for such a righteous "*mensch*".

Very difficult questions to which I would say:

1. Personally I wonder how much the judgment has to do with how much of an imprint or reflection Yahweh will see in all of us.

2. Witness, not "prove" or argue; how much of a witness to Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life *are* you, not *talk* you? A real witness shows and tells what he/she has personally seen, heard and experienced.

3. Wonder together with your friend whether the picture of Isaiah 53 could not be the true picture of both the Messiah and Israel, and then how much Israel in the present Middle East is missing the boat of the — humanly impossible — task of being the Suffering Servant in the situation in order to become the Prince of Peace, the Light of the nations; and how much the figure of Jesus The Mensch-Messiah, and those who truly follow him, may be the Savior of the world.

4. Leave your friend (with prayer) to the most Merciful judgment of Jaweh, whose desire it is that all people should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim.2:3).

3. *Harper's Magazine* is not the Bible on the Bible. There is considerable evidence for historical backgrounds to many O.T. figures, but the *focus* in it all is and must be the presence of Yahweh in human and especially in Israel's history. He holds the whole world, including my and your life, in his cupped hands, but he does not push us around with his fingers unless there is a special reason for it, which he alone can see.

All-inclusive approach unclear

The Bible is the Book that tells us how God walks with us and waits for us, often upset, sometimes very angry, sometimes smiling or rejoicing, but always with a most merciful and patient love. From creation through our messing up, the *Mensch* lived and lives among us until we and our world are ready for his re-creation. His redeeming presence was there before, during and after Jesus. If you believe this, live it with your friend.

I am not clear what Bert means with his new "all-inclusive" approach to religion. We have certainly failed to include all people in God's forgiving love of which John says astounding things in his first letter. We have failed to approach people with the non- judgmental attitude Jesus had for anybody — Jews, Samaritans, pagans, stupid disciples, you name it.

But I read in I John 2:1,2 that Jesus Christ the righteous is the "*hilasmos*" (Greek), the "reconciling Mediator" not just for the sins of Christian believers, but also for the sins of the whole world and as such he is our advocate with the Father.

I have never heard an explanation that helped me completely understand this.

We also read in this letter that God is Love and that whoever loves is born of God and knows God — but then the apostle clearly connects this with confessing Jesus as the Son of God, because it is in him that God shows what his love means (1 John 4:7-17).

So I may agree with Bert, if he believes that we must meet people of other faiths on this common ground that God loves them and accepts them where they are and our Christian presence with them can only be *first* in careful, humble and appreciative listening to them both in their critique of us and our Christianity and in their searching questions. And *second* in clearly acknowledging their honest and valid criticism — and there can be lots of it — and only *then*, when our lives witness to their truth, may we speak the words which Jesus would have spoken about himself and them.

Of course redemption is not confined to Christendom, redemption is the liberation of the whole of creation in its completion the victory over futility (Rom.8:18-25). In what way righteous Jews and people of other faiths or, for that matter, just innocent people will share in this redemption we don't know. (See Jonah 4:11; Rom.2:12-16; Rev.22:2)

But on the pilgrimage of life we must take deeply serious the way we as Christians live not only with our neighbor but with the whole of God's creation. It is remarkable that Yahweh includes the cattle in his mercy in Jonah 4:11. Maybe it already tells us how slanted we look at the world that we find this remarkable. Perhaps this is a thought that might help us returning to our roots of wholistic instead of dualistic thinking (i.e. man vs. nature; nature vs. grace; spirit vs. matter; justice vs. mercy).

I believe with Bert that complacency may well be the biggest rot in Christianity, as well as in other religions. And perhaps the lack of awe and wonder in our worship is due to the fact that we are more self- and people-focused in it than Yahweh focused. I even wonder how much of this may be present in the almost exclusively Jesus- centredness of much evangelical "Praise and Worship."

We as Christians may well have to restudy and rethink both the meaning and scope of several of our deep-rutted terms such as: salvation, redemption, atonement, election.

Just a note on this last one: I believe that election should be understood more in "elite" terms, as chosen for special, usually tough service (like Marine Corps) rather than as being exclusively picked for heaven.

I would like to see more discussion of Bert's and my struggles in CC.

taste of tomato

taste of tomato
on anticipating tongue
defies classification

only Botanists file as fruit
salt sweet juicy firmness
sliced diced slivered
veggie salad
soup salsa sauce
piquant tangy mellow
in that balloon thin skin
bursting redness bitten
dripping down chin

did it come across Your
palette at creation?
did You crave that flavor in the desert?
wish Martha could have used it
in her culinary pursuits?
remember it
planted far away on that hillside
in South America?

taste of tomato
a question on my tongue

Linda Siebenga

Christian bookstores open in China

SHANGHAI (Compass) — A new Christian bookstore opened in Shanghai on April 1. Run by a young Christian entrepreneur, it is one of a handful of public Christian bookstores now operating in China. However, not one Bible is for sale. Only books published internationally are allowed to be sold. Christian books (including Bibles) published by the China Christian Council and the Amity Press are only given a provincial imprint and therefore are not permitted to be sold openly to the public. Across China there are a few hundred large official state churches in cities that operate book tables or small book rooms. These are usually open only on Sundays to churchgoers. At least five new Christian bookstores are now open in major cities. Most opened during the last few months. The one in Shanghai attracts about 50 customers and browsers every day, of whom more than half are non-Christians. Knowledge of the existence of the shop is passed by word of mouth.

Film Review

Minority Report: *the eyes have it*

Harry der Nederlanden

It's the year 2054. Washington, D.C. The murder rate in the city has been cut down to zero. It's the work of a powerful corporation working for the government using a system that detects murders before they occur. By arresting the perpetrator before he can actually kill, the Pre-Crime Unit has been so successful it is on the point of going national. All that is necessary is to pass scrutiny by an FBI investigator.

The agency can predict crime using three psychic young people called Precogs: as they lie floating in a pool, dreaming, they receive images from the minds of people about to commit murder. The minds of the Precogs are wired to computers that project the prophetic images onto a huge transparent screen.

DREAMWORKSFANSITE.COM PHOTOS (2)

Tom Cruise plays John Anderton, chief detective of the Pre-Crime Unit.

Cruise: lean, energetic, efficient, driven

It's the brainchild of a giant corporation, but the chief detective is John Anderton, played by Tom Cruise. Anderton resembles several other heroes played by Cruise in the past: he is a lean, energetic, efficient, driven, successful man who is very much in command, quick to grasp the situation and quick to act. He is wholly committed to what he is doing.

In the opening scenes, he strides decisively into the high tech headquarters in response to an alert. The Precogs have begun receiving images of a murder about to be committed. Anderton stands in front of the huge screen that collects the images as they come up, and, like a maestro directing an orchestra, he unscrambles the images and makes sense of them, arranging them into a story-line that he and his Precrime Unit can use to identify and locate the prospective murderer before the dirty deed can be committed.

Okay, so it is a bit far-fetched. But fantasy and science fiction call for a "willing suspension of disbelief," and I think most viewers have no difficulty swallowing the science fictional stuff on which the story is premised. Although the film is science fiction, it also has elements of an old fashioned detective story and of an adventure thriller.

We see the first pre-murderer stopped and cuffed at the last minute by cops who rappel out of the sky from futuristic helicopters; we see him cryogenically frozen in a capsule and stored in a giant deep-freeze with hundreds of others who were snagged before actually making themselves guilty of the crime for which they were arrested. This is not just science fiction as diversion, we realize; this is science fiction as allegory or social critique, like *1984* or *Animal Farm*.

Anderton is murderer-to-be

When the images for the next case begin leaping onto the screen, super-cop Anderton suddenly sees his own face on the screen. The next murder in the making that the Precogs have detected identifies Anderton as the murderer-to-be. Temporarily concealing his discovery, Anderton makes a run for it. He doesn't even recognize the prospective victim on the screen and sets out to solve the mystery, suspecting that he is being framed, perhaps by the FBI investigator jealous of his power.

The chase begins. The isolated, clever, ever-resourceful hero becomes the object of an all-out police dragnet, giving us chase scene after chase scene. Outsmarting, outmaneuvering and outfighting the giant corporation, where he'd been the big gun only the day before, he doggedly pursues the missing piece of the puzzle which will exonerate him. The cop who believed that reality consists of an inexorable series of events which defines a person as a murderer before he even commits the act, now is sure that he is free to alter the predicted course of events.

So *Minority Report* picks up on current anxieties about preserving safety and public security as well as discussions about pre-emptive strikes and violations of due process. These have been quickly noted by the critics. But the movie works by touching on other themes as well.

All the different kinds of stories evoked by the film – science fiction, detective, thriller – work by stringing together events into a logical sequence. Science fiction extends and highlights elements of our time by projecting them into an exaggerated future. In the traditional detective film, clues and events must in the end fall into order, in a moment when all becomes clear and the crime is solved. A good adventure story, too, must not just be a series of disconnected, random events, but must trace a coherent pattern so that the hero arrives somewhere definite.

John Anderton is a man dedicated to uncovering such patterns so that the society of which he is part can be a safer more secure place. The dangerous, unpredictable events that erupt from the dark underworld must be prevented. To him, discerning order and imposing it are pretty much the same thing.

His personal motivation

This drive to order the world around him has a personal motivation for John Anderton. His son had been kidnaped from under his nose years before, never to return. At the heart of his commitment to Precrime and to the dream of a safer society, there's a deep loss and pain. Below the surface, the driven, disciplined cop is a hurting man.

Over against this masculine drive to aggressively impose order on the world there is another element; it is associated with the feminine. The power of the Precogs — a kind of E.S.P. — is depicted as primarily feminine in character: it involves a hypersensitivity and receptivity to the traumas in the surrounding community. But these come as a chaotic flood of images. It is the technology of the Precrime agency and the interpretive ordering of Anderton that arranges them into a logical pattern that can be used to identify and capture the prospective murderer – on the assumption, of course, that events follow a cause-and-effect chain that culminate inevitably in the deed. So the feminine mind of the Precogs has been colonized, technologized and denatured, which is symbolized by the dehumanized state in which they are kept. They are treated as part of a machine.

The discoverer of this intuitive power is not the respected head of the Precrime Agency, Anderton's mentor, but a crabby old woman Anderton encounters in his search for the missing clue. She has been set aside. He finds her tending monstrous plants in her greenhouse. There is no room for her in the order of things represented by the Agency.

Alienated from his wife

Then there's Anderton's wife. He has become alienated from her, too, in his single-minded devotion to ridding the world of the violent trauma he has suffered.

Near the end of the film, we discover that the missing piece of the puzzle, the primal scene that is at the root of the kind of knowing embodied in the agency, involves violence against a woman.

This underlying contrast between masculine and feminine modes of seeing or knowing (cognition), governs the entire movie.

Many critics have commented on the gratuitous sensationalism of having Anderton's eyes removed and Spielberg's indulgence in special effects with the robot spiders that check everyone's eyes as an I.D. check as well as having everyone identified by their eye-print wherever they go. But his is hardly gratuitous; it is an essential theme in the film – our over-reliance on the eye for knowledge. It makes us superficial, manipulable. We have become too dependent on surfaces as a result of a long tradition of empiricism. We only feel safe with what we can see and manipulate; what erupts into our rational world from below, from the invisible is a threat which must be suppressed or colonized.

Many have noted the association of the dynamics of the Precrime Agency with a police state, but there are also connection with our social sciences. Both sociology and psychology would kill for a knowledge that could predict and head off violence and murder in human beings – all in the name of creating a safer, more humane world, of course.

Veering toward suppression

The movie's structure and imagery do, therefore, stimulate us to puzzle about why our collective quest for security tends to veer toward suppression. And it points toward a primal scene of violence at the root of it all. The themes that suggest we've become seduced by the lust of the eyes can be construed in a biblically constructive way. As many thinkers, non-Christian as well as Christian, have pointed out, we have been bent in that direction by our culture's faith in science, in empiricism (the witness of the senses and by naturalism, the assumption that everything can be explained in terms of this world.

This does involve a suppression of what many have called "feminine" ways of knowing and an over-emphasis on aggressive, domineering "masculine" ways. But this is to mistake a symptom for a fundamental cause. Sin has caused alienation between men and women, between feeling and intellect, but the latter are the results of sin, not its origin.

Many viewers and critics, even those who admire the film, confess that it leaves them curiously detached in the end and that the clever

Continued on page 17...

The Pre-Crime Unit can predict crime using three psychic young people (in background called Precogs: as they lie floating in a pool, dreaming, they receive images from the minds of people about to commit murder.

Church

English Anglicans, Methodists move one step closer to church unity

Cedric Pulford

LONDON, England (ENI) — Anglicans and Methodists in England took a key step towards unity when their governing bodies accepted a report proposing a covenant between the two churches.

Each church agreed overwhelmingly to refer the report for grassroots reactions before bringing it back to the national bodies next year.

The covenant proposal was debated by the Methodist annual conference on July 1 and the Church of England's general synod on July 6.

Likle a long process

Richard Thomas, a Church of England diocesan official and a general synod member, told ENI: "It's likely to be a long process. Everyone is mindful of the previous attempt that failed [in 1972] because people were rushing it."

The 1972 unity attempt failed because of Anglican opposition — although it had come "within a whisker of establishing full, visible unity", the archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, told U.S. Methodists in 2000.

Thomas expected that next year a timetable for further work would be set out if grassroots reactions to the covenant were favorable. The plan needed "masses and masses of space."

The covenant was proposed in a Common Statement published in December last year following formal conversations between the two churches.

The statement explored common ground, including the profession of the fundamental Christian faith grounded in Scripture and expressed in the ecumenical creeds of the Church; the sharing of one baptism and the celebrating of one Eucharist; a common ministry of word and sacraments; and a common ministry of oversight.

The United Reformed Church, which has been in informal trilateral conversations with the Anglicans and Methodists, has been following the covenant process by invitation.

Like an engagement

If adopted, the covenant would still be several stages short of a scheme of unity. It has been likened to an engagement with both partners working at removing obstacles to the marriage.

Speaking in the Methodist debate on July 1, John Taylor, co-chair of the formal conversations, described it as "a small step, an invitation to a pilgrimage to get to know each other."

Among the issues to be resolved by the churches, he said, were women's ministry, the role of bishops, lay people presiding at the Eucharist and the Church of England's status as the state (established) church.

Murray White, the Methodist spokesman, said circuits (groups of churches) and districts would each be asked to give their responses to the proposed covenant.

"The circuits will get the grassroots views, but the district responses will also be valuable in showing if there are any regional variations," he told ENI.

Richard Thomas said that on the Anglican side, the covenant would be referred to dioceses. He described the timetable as "tight" but manageable.

The covenant would apply only to England, although the Methodist Church involved in the unity plan also covers Scotland and Wales.

The Methodist Church is taking part in separate talks with Anglicans and other denominations in Scotland and Wales about church unity.

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, was an Anglican clergyman, and the two churches have long been conscious of their common roots. In 1946, the then archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, issued an ecumenical appeal to which the Methodists responded, starting the process that has led to the proposed covenant.

English church charges admission

Cedric Pulford

LONDON, England (ENI) — Westminster Abbey in London charges six pounds ($5.50 Cdn.) per adult for admission, but it has been praised by a leading tourism official as a "shining example" of how to handle large numbers of tourists effectively.

Adrian Clark, of the Tourism Society, said that by imposing admission charges, the medieval abbey had acted to avoid the "downside of tourism", which was erosion of the building through wear and tear.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which met in London recently, has expressed concern at the wear and tear affecting many of Britain's historic religious buildings and has suggested that further control measures may be necessary.

GEOFF DORE, BRUCE COLEMANN LTD.

Worshipers at services can still attend Westminster Abbey free of charge.

One of Britain's most visited churches

The abbey authorities themselves insists that the medieval building is not threatened by weight of numbers despite receiving at least 1.75 million tourists a year. Westminster Abbey is among Britain's most visited churches along with St Paul's Cathedral (also in London), Canterbury Cathedral and York Minster.

The abbey started charging to visit the nave in 1997 as a response to growing congestion. Canon David Hutt, the sub-dean of Westminster, who is responsible for the abbey's maintenance, said the main purpose of charging for entry was to recover the spirituality of the building.

"We could never go back to the hurly-burly," he told ENI. "We now have a proper degree of management, and visitors are sharing with us concern for the fabric and spirituality."

Many visitors to the church, where Britain's kings and queens have been crowned for centuries, pay less than the full adult ticket price. As well as offering concession tickets, the abbey admits children under 11, worshipers at services and individuals attending for private prayer free of charge.

Hutt said he took a philosophical view about wear and tear, which was not only about people touching walls but also about "breathing and sweating".

Canterbury Cathedral, the mother church of the world-wide Anglican Communion, which also charges for entry, expressed confidence that its visitor numbers were manageable.

The cathedral had 1.15 million visitors last year.

It charges 3.50 pounds for an adult admission, with a range of concessions and free entry for worshipers and people wishing to pray privately. Free passes have been issued to those who live or work in Canterbury or who are members of an Anglican church in the diocese.

Cathedral spokesman Christopher Robinson told ENI that litter was more of a problem than fabric wear and tear. The pavement in front of the site of the shrine of Archbishop Thomas a Becket (who was martyred in the cathedral in 1170) was roped off, but he was not aware of serious erosion as some feared.

Fifth of Anglican clergy may quit over women 'bishops'

LONDON, England (Zenit.org) — One-fifth of the Anglican clergy indicated that they might leave the Church of England if women were allowed to be designated bishops, a new survey finds.

Eight years since women were first allowed to be designated as Anglican priests, 25 per cent of clergy and 17 per cent of laity believe that there "should not be any women bishops anywhere," the *Times* reported.

The Catholic Church has always held that the priesthood of Christ is restricted to men; hence, the question of women bishops is moot. Among Anglicans, however, about half of the clergy and 60 per cent of the laity support the idea of women bishops. But 20 per cent of clergy indicated that they might go so far as to leave the Anglican Communion, with five per cent signaling a definite intention to leave.

The traditionalist group Cost of Conscience commissioned Christian Research, a leading research body, to probe the views and beliefs of Anglican clergy and laity.

Just 26 per cent of Anglo-Catholics (they were formerly called High-Church Anglicans) were looking forward to women bishops, compared with 71 per cent of "liberals" and 47 per cent of "evangelicals," the survey said. More than half of the High Churchmen said there should not be any women bishops, compared with five per cent of "liberals" and 29 per cent of "evangelicals."

The *Times* said that the extent of opposition to the notion of female bishops is surprising because many traditionalists have already left the Anglican church over the issue of women's ordination. Since the first "priestly" ordinations of women in 1994, more than 400 male Anglican clergy have left the ministry.

Colombian priest gunned down

COLOMBIA (Compass) — A gunman shot Father José Hilario Arango to death at close range in front of the Santa Teresa church in Cali on June 27, just after the priest had celebrated evening Mass. Arango became the third Roman Catholic priest to die at the hands of assassins in Colombia this year.

In April, gunmen murdered Father Juan Ramon Nuñez in nearby Huila state as he served communion in his church. That murder followed the highly publicized assassination of the Archbishop of Cali, Isaias Duarte Cancini, on March 16. Police suspect members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) of involvement in the Nuñez murder and believe Cali drug traffickers, allied with corrupt politicians, masterminded the attack on Archbishop Duarte.

At press time, the investigation into the death of the 47-year-old Arango continues. Regardless of who killed Arango, the crime left Colombia mourning yet another fallen church leader. Since 1988, homicides have claimed the lives of 29 Roman Catholic priests and 65 Protestant pastors.

Vietnamese minority group welcomed to U.S. by World Relief

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (EP) — The first of more than 900 Montagnard refugees from Vietnam left Cambodia for freedom in the United States during the first week in June. World Relief, working with partnering churches, welcomed nearly 100 Montagnard refugees in North Carolina as they arrived in early June.

The Montagnard people are minority groups that live in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The new refugees fled across the border into Cambodia in February 2001 after security forces quashed their protests over land rights and religious freedom. World Relief estimated that more than 50 percent of these refugees are Christians.

ED SCOTT

A Montagnard (Hmong) child

Rescued by Montagnards

To Tim Ziemer, World Relief's executive director, the Montagnards are particularly special. During the 1968 Tet Offensive, his missionary parents were attacked, leaving his father dead and his mother critically wounded. It was the Montagnard people who rescued his mother and helped her get to a hospital for life-saving treatment.

Plans were made by the United Nations, Cambodia and Vietnam to allow these refugees to return to Vietnam, but the U.N. pulled out of this arrangement in March when U.N. staff witnessed the refugees being mistreated and threatened. Cambodia then approved of the U.S. offer to take them.

The Montagnards (also known as the Hmong) reside predominantly in Vietnam's northwest provinces, along the Laos and Chinese boarders.

Some Christian leaders disappear

More than half of Vietnam's one million Protestants come from the Montagnards, but they have been severely persecuted, especially since February 2001 when disaffection with government oppression resulted in street demonstrations. According to the Vietnam watcher, 30 Christian leaders have already received jail sentences ranging from three to 12 years. Others have simply disappeared, and a further 200 Christians have been arrested this year.

Many Montagnards describe themselves as "Dega" Protestants, which the authorities view as a separatist movement. The Montagnards have lost ownership of their land and have suffered from falling prices for a key crop: coffee, Human Rights Watch said.

Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, a Vietnamese Mennonite pastor trained in law, regularly confronts the authorities with extensive evidence of torture of Christians. In April he showed the Vietnam watcher gruesome photos of his latest persecution case — a tribal pastor named Truc, who is shown with eyes swollen, cuts on his face and clothes badly torn. He was the victim of an increasingly common police tactic: the police encourage unemployed youth to beat up selected victims and then the police refuse to intervene.

Pastor Truc was on his way to visit a Christian family in a nearby village in early April when 20 drunken youths attacked him. They left him for dead under a bush. When he regained consciousness, Truc staggered to a nearby police post to report what had happened. The police advised him they could not help because he was in the wrong jurisdiction.

The Vietnam watcher wrote, "Pastor Quang is nonplused that some American Mennonites, who opposed their government's participation in the Vietnam War, appear to have faith in the Vietnamese government and are silent regarding the widespread persecution of Christians.

French Protestants re-establish warm relations with ecumenical community

Bernadette Sauvaget

PARIS, (ENI) — French Protestant church leaders have signalled a "new era of relations" with one of the best-known ecumenical religious communities in Europe.

For the first time in more than a decade, a delegation from the French Protestant Federation (FPF) earlier this month paid an official visit to Taize, the French ecumenical community that each year welcomes more than 100,000 youth from around the world for prayer and study.

The visit was "a way of saying that a new era of relations can begin", Gill Daude, head of the FPF's ecumenical service, told ENI. The last time an FPF president visited the hilltop community in Burgundy was in 1989.

The relations between the FPF and Taize started to deteriorate in the 1970s, when several events offended Protestant sensitivities: a stand taken in favor of priestly celibacy by Brother Roger, the founder of the community, as well as his ties to successive popes, and the conversion to Catholicism and ordination to the Catholic priesthood of Max Thurian — a Protestant and the right hand of Brother Roger — in 1987.

Stong ties with foreign Protestants

But in spite of the breach that developed between the FPF and Taize, groups of young French Protestants continued to frequent the community. Taize has also always maintained strong ties with foreign Protestant and Anglican churches. This summer, for example, several Lutheran bishops from Sweden and Anglican bishops from Great Britain will be staying at the community.

"The meeting with the FPF was warm and characterized by a spirit of fraternity," Brother Emile, head of Taize's external relations, told ENI.

Beyond the wish to mark the rapprochement of the two bodies in some way, the leaders of the FPF also wanted to exchange ideas with leaders of the Taize community on youth pastoral ministry.

"Taize occupies a particular place in the religious landscape," stressed Daude. "At Taize, young people experience faith in an ecumenical setting. They discover, as it were, the universal church."

A sort of laboratory for the transmission of spiritual experience and faith, Taize continues to intrigue observers by its success with youth. In this, its success poses a challenge to many church leaders.

"We also are concerned with training a new generation committed to ecumenism," Daude continued. "After the first generation of builders, a new one is, for the moment, not yet in sight."

10 tips on effective church advertising

James Dotson

ATLANTA (BP)—Advertising can be a good way for churches to reach their communities, but some common pitfalls can decrease the effectiveness of such efforts, according to a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church advertising specialist.

A billboard advertising "sound biblical teaching," for instance, might reach some people — but those people likely are already attending another church, said Vince Garrett, of NAMB's media strategy team. Non-Christians might be more attracted by an appeal to the need for stronger families or connecting with God. The sound biblical teaching comes as a natural outgrowth of those themes.

Common mistakes made

Garrett's list of 10 common mistakes in church advertising was part of a workshop session on "Innovative Advertising for your Church" offered during a regional conference for pastors and missionaries.

Those mistakes — and the more-effective strategies — include:

1. "Doing something because it worked somewhere else."

Every community, church and situation has its own set of dynamics. "There are things that are transferable, but we have to be careful about hearing about something that works and immediately doing the same thing," Garrett said.

2. "Targeting a medium and not an audience."

Be careful about saying, "We really need to get on the radio" rather than deciding on the message and crafting a broad-based plan for communicating that message.

3. "Using a 'shotgun approach' when targeted advertising is more effective."

Garrett suggested using a "heavy-on, then off" approach of concentrating advertising into shorter periods of time for the most impact, with each campaign focused on a specific message.

4. "Doing what you like, rather than what's best for the intended audience," a concept illustrated by the billboard example.

5. "Using church 'rhetoric' instead of words everyone understands."

The use of words such as "fellowship" or "saved," for instance, should be avoided if the goal is to reach unchurched people.

6. "Highlighting what you don't do instead of what you do."

A strong children's ministry might be a goal, but advertising shouldn't over-sell. "Focus on what you are doing that is good and strong, and not what you hope to be," Garrett said.

7. "Highlighting a program instead of a benefit."

Sunday school might be an excellent ministry, but people are more drawn to messages describing the relationships and Bible knowledge their family will receive.

8. "Not taking advantage of the calendar."

Holidays, seasons, and even the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack can provide themes for events that can be advertised, Garrett said.

9. "Relying on a single medium."

The most effective advertising reinforces the same message to audiences by multiple exposures over different mediums.

10. "Using media without a plan"

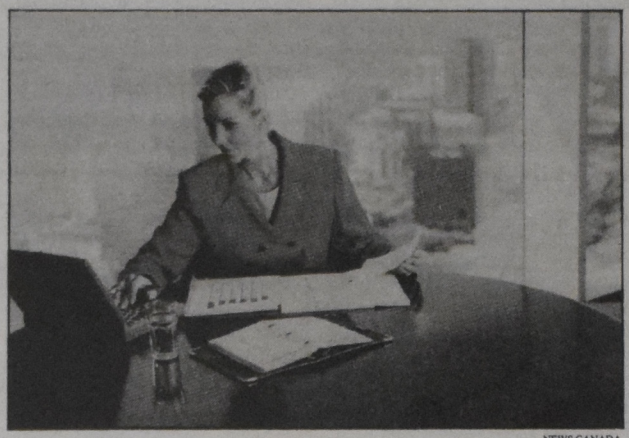
Churches should take the time to research and plan their advertising at least a quarter, and possibly a year, in advance — taking advantage of the expertise of individuals in the church.

Opinion

Low interest rates can threaten charities

David van der Woerd

The current run of low interest rates has meant increased spending power for all Canadians and has had a great effect on our economy. That's great news for most Canadians, but not for all. Some public and private foundations have found themselves in an awkward position because of these low interest rates, to the extent that their very existence as a charity is being threatened. Here's why.



NEWS CANADA

All registered charities must comply with a "disbursement quota" under the Income Tax Act, to discourage inappropriate accumulations of capital, and to keep administrative expenses at a reasonable level.

All registered charities are required to comply with something called a "disbursement quota" under the *Income Tax Act* . The purpose of this quota is threefold: to ensure that the charities expend the funds they receive on their charitable purposes each year, to discourage inappropriate accumulations of capital, and to keep administrative expenses at a reasonable level.

To meet its disbursement quota, a charity must take into account only monies spent *directly* on charitable activities such as paying for salaries of persons performing the charitable work, buying equipment, or giving to other registered charities. It doesn't include anything spent on activities that do not directly carry out the charity's object, such as professional fees, management and administrative activities and fund-raising activities.

Building up a capital fund

Some gifts made to registered charities are not included in their disbursement quota. Those include 10-year gifts, or gifts received that are subject to a written trust or direction that the property given be held by the charity for a period of not less than 10 years. Such gifts enable a charity to accumulate a capital fund so that, for example, it can use the interest income to grant scholarships. Those gifts must be held for at least 10 years; after that, when they are spent, they must be included in calculating the disbursement quota.

Public or private foundations, however, are required to spend "4.5 per cent of the average value of any assets the foundation owned over the previous 24 months that were not used directly in charitable activities or in the administration of the foundation, calculated in a prescribed manner, *less* 100 per cent of any amounts used in calculating ....." In English, this means that public and private foundations have to spend income produced from a 10-year gifts equal to at least 4.5 per cent of its value each year that they hold onto that gift.

If you were able to follow any of this, you might now see why low interest rates have put the squeeze on public and private foundations. If they have produced returns on their capital less than 4.5 per cent per year, they will have to find a way around the disbursement quota. The *Income Tax Act* allows them to draw on previous years' excesses, if there were any. If there weren't any excesses, then they can apply for relief to reduce the disbursement quota.

As fun as visiting dentist

My guess is that this process is as much fun as going to the dentist. CCRA will only approve such a request in "exceptional", "specific", "unforeseen" circumstances, which are "outside the charity's control". What that means is anybody's guess, but it doesn't sound good to me. I think I'll avoid relying upon that section too heavily when I'm advising a client.

So if your charity's income from investments has dropped below 4.5 per cent in any year, keep your head up because there could be trouble on the horizon.

The Charities Directorate in Ottawa is aware of this problem. Apparently so is the Department of Finance. In a letter this year to the provincial government's Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, the Director explained that CCRA "is very much aware that current interest rates are placing registered charities in an awkward position with regard to meeting a part of the disbursement quota under the Income Tax Act...(that) requires them to disburse 4.5 per cent of investment assets". He says that "the Department of Finance...has undertaken to look into the matter."

He also said that CCRA will "not revoke charities whose failure to meet their disbursement quota is directly attributable to this unfortunate situation" provided that those charities request appropriate alleviation.

Several years ago the province of Ontario made various changes to the *Trustee Act* to allow trustees of money more flexibility in their investment powers of funds. This amendment may be the gift horse that will save Ontario public and private foundations from the wrath of the federal 4.5 per cent requirement.

David van der Woerd is a partner at Ross & McBride, practicing in commercial and real estate law, with a special interest in charity law. He is also a part-time instructor of Business Law at Redeemer University College.

The time has come!!
We have moved our office to 1 Hiscott St.
Thank you to all who helped out to make our move easier.
CC Staff

Happiness is overrated

Tony Campolo, Eastern University

In a recent cross-cultural study, mothers were asked what they wanted for their children. Japanese mothers, for the most part, answered that they wanted their children to be successful. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Japanese have been raising the most success-oriented children. American mothers were asked the same question. Their answer was almost without exception, "We want our children to be happy." Happiness is the big thing for us Americans. While most of us seldom ever read the Declaration of Independence, we all have memorized that line that makes "the pursuit of happiness" one of our inalienable rights.

'Good!'

My own Italian mother bought into neither of these value orientations. If you had asked my mother what she wanted me to be when I grew up, she would have answered "GOOD!" Of course she wished me success and happiness; it's just that these were not her dominant hopes for me. More important for her, was for me to be a good person. I think my mother had it right!

Given our emphasis on happiness, our marriages aren't working out too well. Almost 40 per cent of them end in divorce, mainly because when couples experience times of unhappiness (as most married couples do), they all too often rush the divorce to court. They too easily forget that they promised to stay together for better or for worse. And by putting personal happiness above all else they often leave behind psychologically devastated children. The idea of setting aside optimum happiness for the sake of children runs counter to the narcissistic lifestyles. Doing the right thing for the sake of others does not loom large in their decision-making process.

Life not delivering high levels of happiness

They are often frustrated because life is not delivering the high levels of happiness that they have been taught to believe is their due. Children know that being happy is what we expect of them, but they haven't a clue as to how that happiness is supposed to be achieved. Being good, unlike happiness, is definable and, with God's help, somewhat achievable. But we seldom tell children that being good is the ultimate goal in life. It is urgent that we commit ourselves to raising up a generation of children of whom it can be said that goodness and mercy will follow them all the days of their lives so that they might dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Reneging on God's call?

The wife of a deeply Christian man I know was tragically afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Her memory seemed to vanish almost overnight. She couldn't talk coherently. She couldn't feed herself. And she became incontinent. When he resigned from the presidency of a Bible College, where he had provided outstanding leadership, in order to take care of her full-time, his friends tried to take time to convince him to rescind his resignation. They urged him to get for her the best nursing care possible, but said that it made no sense for him to personally care for someone who didn't even know who he was. Then, laying a guilt trip on him, one of his friends said, "You know you're *reneging* on your calling from God!"

His answers were classic! He said, "You're right! She doesn't know who I am – but I know who she is. She's the same woman I married. Furthermore, there's only one thing that takes precedence over our calling from God, and that's a promise. And I promised I would be there for her till death do us part."

He's not happy about having to change her diapers many times a day, and he's not happy about trying to feed her, as food dribbles from the sides of her mouth. I don't think he's at all happy these days, but he's a *good* man – and I believe God honors that.

Tony Campolo teaches at Eastern University in St. David's, Pennsylvania. His website address is: **www.tonycampolo.com**

Love at ten thousand feet

George Vandervelde

I'm on a long distance flight. One seat over sits Dawn, a woman in her forties. We get into a conversation about her life. She is a teacher who has been serving for many years in a school with very needy children. They present hosts of problems. Each day is a new challenge. She could get a transfer to a "better" school situation with the stroke of a pen but feels she can't abandon these kids. She is a single parent and has a young daughter. Dawn obviously dotes on her daughter and, despite the demands of her profession, devotes a great deal of time to her.

In the course of the conversation she asks me about my life and work. I tell her what I do and what I believe. Having listened to my story, she responds, "That's very intriguing. Personally, I don't believe in God, but it's obviously true for you."

There's only one hitch

Not wanting to let her unhook from the conversation in this nifty way, I respond, "There's only one hitch: if what I believe turns out to be true for me, it is also true for you." She's taken aback somewhat by this suggestion and says, "But if what you believe does turn out to be true, I can't imagine, at the end of my life, hearing 'god' say, 'Dawn, you've lived a rather good life. There's only one problem: You haven't acknowledged me. To hell you go eternal torture.'"

When I recover a bit from this unexpected turn, I try to pick up a thread and say, "Yes, that does sound awfully harsh. But suppose your devotion to those pupils, the love you lavish on your daughter, your care for others — suppose all of that is possible because, in a world that is in danger of imploding by the weight of selfishness and hatred, God broke open the floodgates of love. Suppose he did that in the person of Jesus. Suppose he did that specifically by engaging in a horrendously dangerous and costly rescue effort that includes torture-death on a cross. Now, let's switch back to your life. You obviously love your daughter. You are always there for her and, if you were to land in such dire straits, you would be prepared to give up your life for her. Given all of that, imagine that your daughter would never — in all [the] your years of being together [lavishing your love on her] — not once would she turn to you, give you a great big hug and say, 'I love you, Mom.'"

That's my high altitude love story. I was prompted to tell it by recent discussions of Bert Hielema's musings about the salvation of those who do not know Christ. I considered submitting some theological reflections on the key issues. I may still do that at a later point. But for now, I thought it may be more interesting and helpful to tell this personal story. My responses to the situation were largely intuitive. I hope, in fact, that they were Spirit-led. But I'm entirely open, of course, to someone pointing out how badly I missed the boat.

Ice-Bound: An inspiring summer read

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

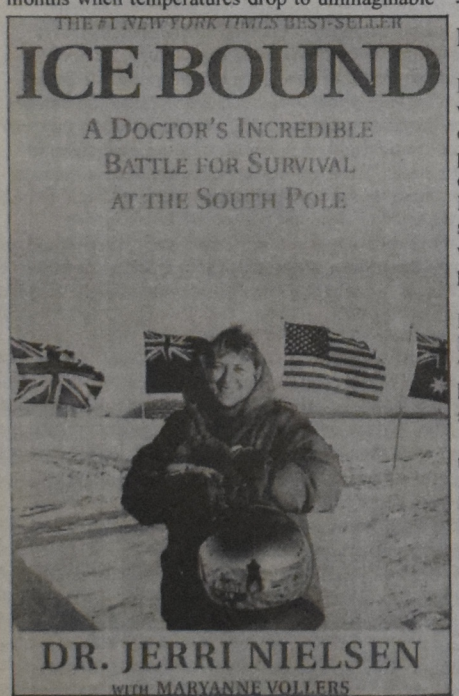
"Out of whose womb came the ice?... The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen." Job 39:29

"Many of us at the Pole are searchers, many are travelers, and many have come, as I did, to destroy demons and to find answers.... For the first time since I was a child I felt at peace. I knew precisely who I was. . . ." Dr. Jerri Nielsen from *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole.*

Life at the South Pole under the Dome with a floor of ice hundreds of feet thick never held the promise of a rose garden. Yet, in this cold and inhospitable place, Jerri Nielsen, a 46-year-old American doctor, experienced a profound *inner* journey through which she became truly aware of who she is.

A geographical cure?

All of us are on a journey of life. Nielsen allows us to be witnesses to hers. She writes openly about how and why in 1998 she signed on for a 12-month stint as the sole medical doctor at the Amundsen-Scott research station at the South Pole. This includes having to "winter over" with 41 other "polies" and to endure dark, sunless months when temperatures drop to unimaginable extremes and flight access is impossible. She gives vivid accounts about the harsh realities of living under the Dome at the world's edge and of the struggles of the creative crew to keep antiquated generators running on which their survival depends. Still, she finds incredible beauty in the icy horizon that stretches as far as the eye can see (and the sun allows) drawing comfort from the stillness of its sheer isolation: a needed antidote to the losses in her personal life.


THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLER
ICE BOUND
A DOCTOR'S INCREDIBLE BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL AT THE SOUTH POLE
DR. JERRI NIELSEN
WITH MARYANNE VOLLERS

Life is not measured in years

Life consists of ongoing experiences. Some of us choose adventure. Others prefer simple living. Whichever we choose, the journey is uniquely ours. Jerri Nielsen chose to go to the South Pole. What made her stint so special that it had a profound effect on who she considered herself to be?

Most often it is not the *places* we travel to or the *experiences* we seek that makes life meaningful. It is *how* we allow these places or experiences to impact and change us. Consequently, we face the choice of being spectators in our experiences or become involved in ways that encourage us, or more often, force us to *grow* or *mature*. That is what *life* is about. Life is not measured in years — but in growth or maturity. Some people are mature beyond their years, others may not be at age 80.

Processing challenges brings peace

Jerri Neilsen struggled for survival at the South Pole on three levels. First, she had to come to terms with her failed marriage, which included losing her children to her ex-husband. Second, she struggled physically and emotionally to meet the challenges of the Pole's sensory deprived environment that Dante described as the ninth circle of Hell. Third, she battled breast cancer, discovered and diagnosed when "wintering" over and no aircraft access was possible to the South Pole.

How did she manage to process all of these challenges? How did she eventually come to love "the Ice?" How did she finally discover who she was? The comprehensive answer lies in *how* she gave of herself and *how* she got that back from a compassionate community.

The book of Job does not paint a gentle picture of the ice. Yet, it was there, Jerri Nielsen through sharing and caring, wonder and hope learned about herself and her indomitable spirit.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Traffic ticket to Amish man spurs fight on religion

PENNSYLVANIA (Religion Today) — When the Pennsylvania state police stopped 22-year-old Jonas Swartzentruber, of an ultra-plain sect of the Old Order Amish, the officer ticketed him for not having an orange and red reflector triangle on his buggy's rear as night fell. According to a report in *The New York Times*, Swartzentruber, "arguing instead for a red lantern and plain gray strips of light-reflecting tape, quietly set a new course across the land, one that landed him in jail for three days."

A grave violation

The case has since sparked a constitutional fight. Swartzentruber refused to pay a $93 fine for not displaying the reflective tri- angle that Pennsylvania requires for slow vehicles. According to *The News York Times*, he considers "the gaudiness of the colors and the symbolism of the triangle a grave violation of the *ordnung*," the unwritten rules governing his sect.

The group is considered to be one of the most "stringent" among Amish groups "devoted to different interpretations of the biblical call in Romans 12:2 to live symbol-free and plain and not conformed to this world."

Donald B. Kraybill, a sociology and religion professor at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., is an expert on Amish congregations and breakaway sects. For the 180,000 Americans who are members, the Amish buggy has become "an implicit religious symbol, signifying rejection of the automobile and other worldly trappings," said Professor Kraybill, who was a witness for the defense. "They have very serious objections to what looks to them like a symbol of the outside world being forced upon their sacred object."

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Fiction

Daydreams and reveries

Gerald Bosacker

Alzheimer's

My castle has been invaded,
the moat spanned and the walls breached.

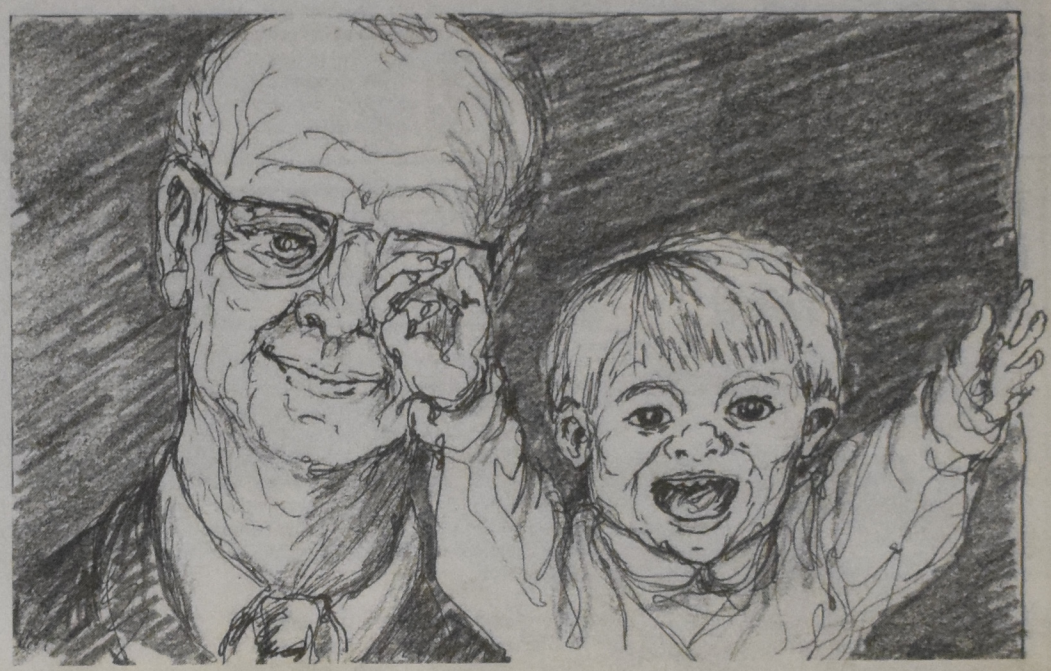
Somewhere within
a prowler paws through my treasures,
purloining past and present.

Those precious gems of remembrances,
he sifts through with sticky fingers
and they disappear from view.

Capriciously, he teases me
with shadows of where they were.

This sneak thief will soon leave
taking away his every footprint.
I won't know he has stolen my name
and wiped away forever my oneness.

No longer aware of my loss,
will I be Victim or Victor?



The old man and his young companion clapped longer than anyone in the tent as the troop of cavorting clowns re-packed into the cramped miniature car and exited the ring.

Carl, senior to his oldest grandson by sixty years, was glad his daughter had extended their stay another three days so he could take Jimmy to the circus. They always enjoyed each other's company, and Carl told himself that the two of them were birds of a feather.

In his reverie, Carl was standing proudly beside Jimmy waiting for the judge to present them the best of show award.

Carl did not see Jimmy's father much. His son-in-law never totally forgave his pessimism over Bob's prospects as a provider for his only daughter when Sue had first brought him home 12 years ago. Carl could not admit he had been envious of Bob's self-confidence and of his assurance that love would always find a way.

Had Carl been equally assured, Inez and he would have married two years sooner, while she was still making more money as an office worker than he was as an apprentice mechanic. They, too, could have found a way and overcome their lean first years just like Bob and Sue. Those hardships had helped Bob and Sue appreciate later successes when Bob's suburban Chicago insurance practice prospered and demanded so much of his time.

Jolted from his reverie by the crack of the horse trainer's whip, Carl watched the pirouetting ponies break ranks to form a single file. He snuck a quick glance at his grandson, who was staring intensely at the procession of six palominos with "Liza, the Girl from the Golden West" standing bareback on the centre lead steed.

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATIONS (4)

Reminding him of his wife

She was a skilled rider, completely in command of her giant horse, yet was no bigger than his Inez had been when they had met 50 years ago. He could not figure why Liza reminded him of his wife, as Inez disliked horses.

Carl remembered loving horses as a child and begging the neighboring farmer for permission to ride his horse. He loved the feeling of being one with the animal, feeling the smoothness and grace as the mount shifted from stiff-legged trot to magic-carpet smoothness at gallop. But after he could afford it, Carl had not taken up riding — because of Inez. She had been traumatized, falling off her pony when she was young, and feared them the rest of her life. Carl did not care to spend his leisure time away from Inez, so he'd never golfed or rode horses. Now retired, he was too old and stiff.

"Hey, Jimmy, you watching the beautiful Liza or the horses?" Carl recognized the far-off look in his grandson's eyes.

Day-dreaming of Liza and palominos

Jimmy was day-dreaming of both Liza and her palominos. He could learn to ride, not ponies, but horses, and they would obey his every wish! There would be a Liza, even prettier, and he would teach her to ride and to love him. They would be with the largest circus and would eat hamburger and beans and save their money and one day they would own their own circus.

As Liza's entourage exited the tent, Jimmy put his dream away to catch the final act of the Circus Grande. The ringmaster introduced Senor Cortez and his Mexican Hairless, Pepe. Jimmy had seen a fanciful representation of Pepe and Senor Cortez on the sign outside the tent, and was anxious to see if Pepe could really balance on one front paw on his master's chin. He had asked grandpa if he could talk to Senor Cortez after the performance, and Gramps had promised to try.

Jimmy really wanted to know how to take care of a dog because Mom had said, "No puppy for you until you can house train it, buy the dog food and clean up its messes." If he could find a dog that small, he could take it everywhere with him, even to first grade. He could teach his puppy lots of tricks and no one would complain, once they saw them perform. Afternoons when they were home from school, they would take the train down to State Street. Their act would be more fun than the man with the saxophone or the woman who pretended to be a statue.

When their hat was filled with money, they would go home and surprise Mom with enough dollars to buy all of the family's groceries. Then Mom would be glad she had bought him a dog.

Every boy needs a dog

As Senor Cortez began his act by trying to shed Pepe from his hands, arms, face and even the top of his head, Carl noticed how eagerly Jimmy watched. Pepe reminded him of his first dog, a part collie that brought in the cows and slept at the foot of his bed.

"Every boy needs a dog, why not Jimmy?" he had begged his daughter, but to no avail.

When he'd been the hardest working salesman of the Baytown Plymouth Agency, he had the persuasive powers that would have overcome such minor arguments based only on inconvenience. Carl thought about how he could prove Jimmy needed a dog for companionship. If he bought the dog for himself and Inez, then asked Nancy to care for it, maybe Jimmy would have a dog.

"Hey, Gramps, we're the last ones out. Mom will want

us waiting by the drinking fountain, and she can't double-park long there. We should have drove, huh? I could've helped, 'cause Grandma says you need help when you drive.

"I can steer but I can't reach the pedals," Jimmy conceded. He knew that he could reach the pedals and he could see out the windshield to steer, but not both at the same time.

Holding tight to Grandpa's hand, just as his mother made him promise, so Grandpa wouldn't forget there were two of them. Jimmy wondered why his mother thought her father was so forgetful. Maybe that's why his Grandfather let Grandma do all the driving.

Curious, he asked. "Grandpa, how come you never drive, don't you like to? I'll bet you don't let anyone else drive that neat cornbertible you're making in the barn."

A classic roadster

Carl winced at the realization Jimmy was aware he was no longer driving, but switched the boy's thoughts, saying, "That's not a cornbertible or even a convertible. It's a roadster. Roadsters don't have roll-up windows in their doors.

"That roadster is a 1929 Plymouth that I'm restoring, not making. That car was new the year your grandpa was born. Walter P. Chrysler made that car to embarrass Ford and Chevy owners, and it sure did. It could outrun them and stop on a dime. The first low-priced car with hydraulic brakes. You remember — those round cylinders that I had you hold closed when I took off the brake drums."

He did remember. Grandpa often let him help him work on the old car, but he was so fussy. Everything had to be kept so clean, and the floor of the old barn was just plain old dusty dirt. Grandpa had promised that when the car was finished, it would be Jimmy's, but it never seemed to get finished.

He decided that a reminder might help the car get finished for him when he started high school: "Grandpa, I loved the circus, but maybe we should've worked on our roadster. You said we'd get it done by the time I'm a high school senior. When will that be?"

In his reverie, Carl was standing proudly beside Jimmy waiting for the judge to present them the best of show award for the first 100 point restoration, and he answered vaguely, "Soon Jimmy, soon. But we have to get everything right so it's a winner!"

Jimmy wasn't too mechanically oriented yet, though he tried very hard to ask intelligent questions when they worked on the car together. Grandpa always patiently explained the purposes for each part and the reason why it worked, but it did not stay in his mind. The finicky care his grandfather took to make sure each piece was "original" seemed stupid to Jimmy, especially since grandpa's talks always included lessons on how and why each part had been improved, and the year of each change. He thought it dumb not using the new improved parts so the old Plymouth would be almost new.

Tires smoking

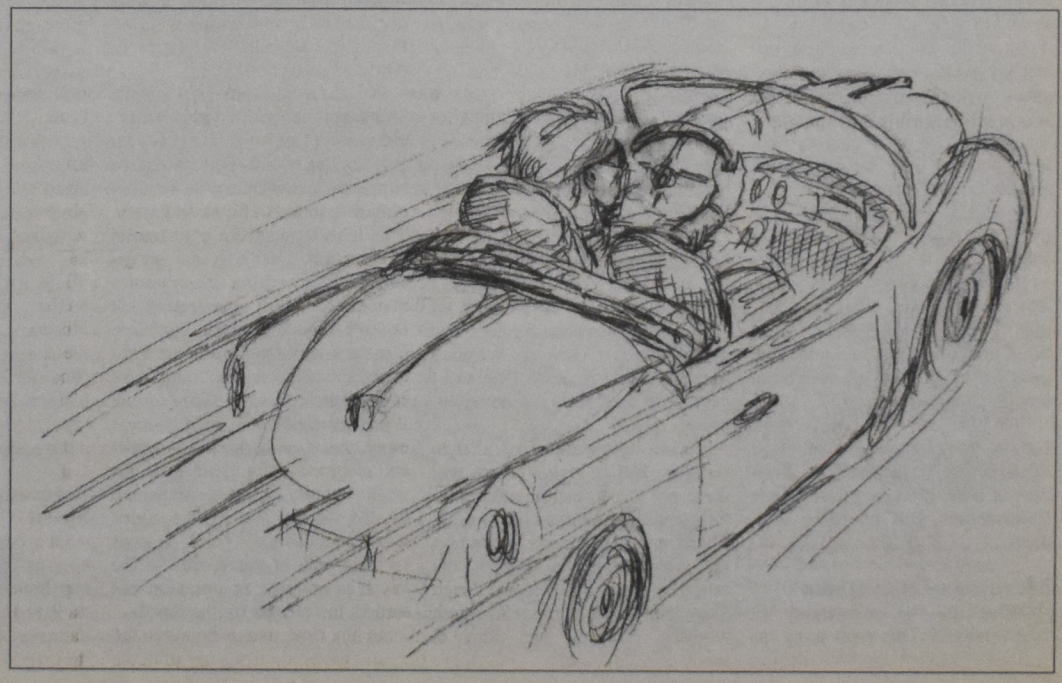
When it was his, he'd have the Chevy garage put in a new Corvette motor, fat tires and power windows. Jimmy could see himself leaving the school parking lot, tires smoking, his friends shocked by the speed of his old jalopy.

Some day, too, he would learn to race his hopped-up roadster and Chevrolet would ask him to drive for them in the Daytona 500.

He was passing Dale Earnhart, on the final lap, when Gramps said, "Your Mom beat us here, I hope she hasn't waited too long. You jump in front with her, I'll stretch out my legs in the back."

As he buckled his seat belt, Jimmy told his Mom, "That was a real neat circus. Gramps and I both like exactly the same things. I can hardly wait until we're both seniors!"

Gerald Bosacker was a random student of the University of Minnesota where he developed a love of words lovingly assembled in print. There, he also discovered a necessity for income and became a printer, which slowly evolved, through fortuitous attrition and serendipity, into advertising and sales. He became Senior Vice President of Sales for Kohl & Madden, where he was a peripatetic executive traveling to and sometimes inspiring that firm's 26 sales branches. Bosacker longed to write of the fascinating people and weird situations discovered in his travels. He now lives in Dunedin Florida in a retirement community, where peer pressure is at an absolute minimum and he is content to indulge his love of words, writing a fresh but undiscovered novel, insightful essays, profound poetry and surprising short stories. His words are published in literary journals, some discriminating E-zines, several perspicacious magazines and in a few vagrant minister's sermon notes. He lives in Dunedin, Fla.



Christian Living

Why go to church?

To get a chance to be converted

A.A. van Ruler

There are many answers that might be given to the question, "Why should I go to church?" The question asks for the motive, the reason, the ground for church-going. But also for the goal, the purpose, what I'm looking for when I go there. That's why there are many answers to this single – but multi-layered – question.

But the Word — the Word proclaimed — can provide an occasion, an opportunity, a special chance for the Spirit to do his work.

Here I consider one of the many possible answers: "The reason I go to church and why people need to go to church is to get a chance to be converted."

This is a very respectable and basic answer. As I've said, it isn't the only answer. In fact, it is a remarkably one-sided answer. If this is the only answer we gave and stopped there, we'd be short-changing the essence of the worship service and also the ground and purpose of going to church. But if we overlooked or rejected this one-sided answer, we'd also be short-changing both.

Question goes unasked

In some right-wing Protestant circles this might even be the most likely answer. For the most part, in such circles, the question is unasked. You go to church because it is part of your spiritual obligation. Your whole life centres about going to church. When the question is posed consciously, however, this whole outlook on religion prompts the answer: we go to church regularly because then we may get a chance to be converted.

In fact, this idea isn't limited to the right wing, it exercises Reformed Christianity, as well. It may even be typically Reformed. Among Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians the thought that one goes to church to be converted would hardly crop up.

Not that this idea stems from Calvin, the father of Reformed Christianity. It received its form from a later, pietistic phase of the Reformation. But its roots sank deep.

Meaning of conversion

What do we understand by "conversion"? This term is by no means fixed. It, too, is many-faceted.

One could say, for example, to be converted is to begin to see oneself as a sinner eternally lost because of his sin.

Usually this interpretation is melded with another: to be converted means that one inwardly and as much as possible outwardly turns away from this earthly, worldly life and instead turns heart and soul toward the inner, spiritual, heavenly life.

From of old, the word "conversion" also contains the connotation of: to make a break with paganism and sin, or, to put it positively, to begin seeing the world as God's creation, and life in its entirety as conscious, positive service to God.

But no matter what is precisely meant, the heart of the matter is to be found elsewhere. You go to church to get a chance that the following happens: that you are struck in the core of your heart, that you are touched inwardly, that you are violently turned around. Then you become "another person". You become a "converted person", [a "born-again person"].

Sounding old-fashioned

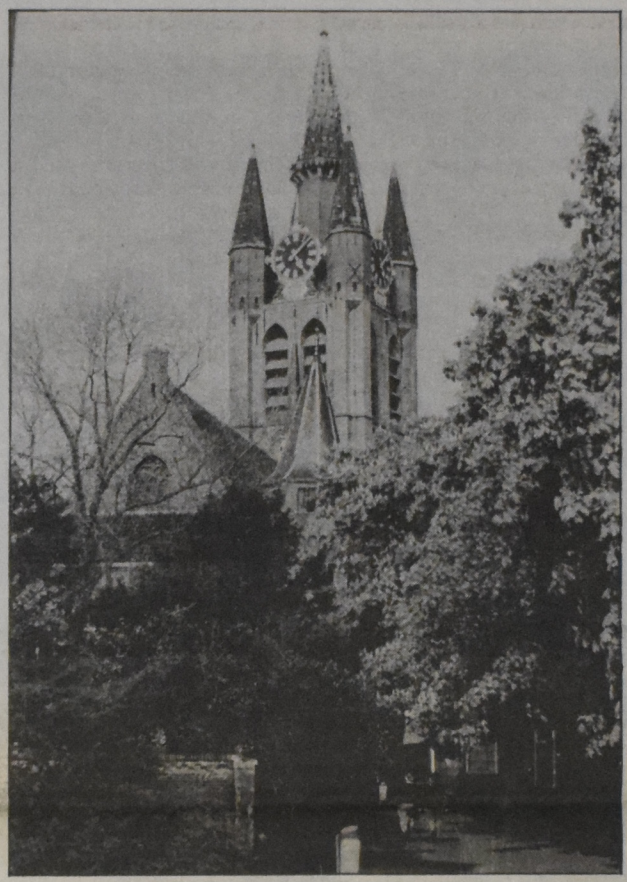
Nowadays these phrases all sound awfully old-fashioned. They belong to a previous age. In our enlightened, socially aware time, they seem out of place.

But are they? I think not. In my judgment, these old-fashioned issues are still frightfully current. Let me try to put them in more contemporary words.

Isn't man still a problem to himself? Isn't he the deepest problem he struggles with? Doesn't he have to come to terms with himself, make peace with himself, become reconciled with himself so that he can completely accept and affirm himself?

And isn't the core of the problems he encounters on the way located in his conscience, in his consciousness that he has messed up, in his sense of guilt? Doesn't that guilt need to be atoned? So isn't the real question for each and every person: "How do I find a merciful God? How do God and I become at one? How is God reconciled?"

These are questions peculiar to religion. But it seems to me that these are the authentic and essential questions of human life as such. There are movements nowadays that want nothing to do with "the religious" as something distinct. They only want to talk about worldly, ordinary life. This is touted as progressive, but might it not be just an alibi to avoid the essential questions of human existence? Do we help others by sending them directly into a purely worldly life? Isn't this an opiate for the people?



CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

A preaching and a ministry that wants to be up-to-date and relevant also has to be concerned with human selfhood and its root problems.

Word is an instrument for the Spirit

But back to our topic: We go to church to get a chance to be converted. It sounds a bit like a lottery. That's because at root it's a matter of occasion. That's to say, we assume that preaching doesn't automatically confer conversion. It doesn't include it or accomplish it. Conversion is something that must happen in man himself. It is a work of the Spirit. But the Word — the Word proclaimed — can provide an occasion, an opportunity, a special chance for the Spirit to do his work. Usually this is accompanied by the notion that if the Spirit works in someone's heart, he does so by means of the Word. So the Word is not just an occasion but also an instrument for the Spirit.

In any case, man is bound to the Word, to the Word made flesh, to the enscripturated Word and to the preached Word. A person must remain in "the way of the means" established by the Lord. That's where he gets his chance. If he remains under the Word, then he has a good chance he'll be touched by the Spirit. That's why all his life he must go to church regularly and faithfully. Who knows: perhaps at some blessed moment the Spirit will strike like lightning in his heart.

All such trains of thought usually arise under the influence exerted by the powerful teaching of predestination. God is a God who wills and acts. He wills and acts in his omnipotent good pleasure. There is election. There is also rejection. Am I elect? Will I know whether I am? If so, then my existence gets an incredibly solid anchor, for then the tightrope of my temporal existence is spanned from God's eternal counsel into his eternal kingdom.

Awesome work of the Spirit

We can gripe about these images as offensive to our Christian and human sensibilities, but they do lend an enormous suspense and intensity to church-going. Then whenever we go to church, we are aware that we are again entering into the force-field of eternal predestination and of the awesome, divine work of the Spirit.

When we go to church with this perspective, we expect that there is where the real things of life will occur. Or at least, we hope so, we look forward to it, we await it. Every Sunday again it's a matter of sink or swim. Will we be eternally saved, eternally redeemed? If not, we are lost forever!

Anyone who takes an honest and unbiased look at those who see life in this way must notice that there are enormous advantages to experiencing life in this way. It not only endows life with an incomparable seriousness, it also gives it an absolute content and meaning. These people know exactly why they are here and that life is absolutely worth the trouble. The question of one's eternal salvation lends more suspense and content to human life than the game for the World Cup of soccer.

In a word, the bow of human existence is stretched to its utmost tension. It is the tension of eternity. Can time have any greater content and meaning than when the accent of eternity is put upon it, to use an image from Kierkegaard. Or to go a step farther, does time retain any content or meaning at all when this accent is absent?

Absolute and bare

But we can cite not just advantages; there are also some drawbacks and shadows. The vision we have sketched above leaves everything awfully absolute and bare, as bare as a forest stripped by fire. In this conception, for example, we do not go to church as the people of God. The minister may not address the congregation as "people of the Lord." Doesn't this deprive the congregation of sacred communion? Are the people still real members of the church? Does the fact that they were baptized and did confession of faith mean anything? Aren't most members then seen as nothing but unconverted people of the world?

Moreover, from this perspective, almost the only reason one goes to church is for the sermon. The sermon is where the sinner is violently and inwardly called and transferred to the state of the redeemed. The rest of what happens in the worship service is mere decoration. It betrays little or no idea that the people of God come together to "liturgize", that is, to praise our Creator and Redeemer. One reason for this one-sided focus on the sermon may be the way the Reformation pushed to the fore the

service of the Word as the real, perhaps even the only, thing that matters.

This perspective reveals little or no trace of the insight that preaching is the means of salvation, that it makes present in the here and now God-in-Christ, that it seriously offers and dispenses God's grace, that it is a proclamation and evocation of the Kingdom of Christ and at the same time a summons, a commanding summons, to faith.

The lightning doesn't strike

One more objection, a big one. From this perspective, although one may go to church faithfully and collectively, one comes away disappointed. Again and again nothing happens. The lightning doesn't strike. As a result, the worship service becomes a disillusionment. This can lead to a terrible spiritual numbing, or, what is worse, a slumbering despair. Then, instead of being a lightning rod for the Spirit, the sermon becomes a deflector. And in the long run going to church faithfully means that it passes you by.

But we must ask not just what is worthwhile and what is objectionable in this vision; we must also ask, To what extent is it true? Isn't this absolute moment of conversion part of our spiritual life? Doesn't time derive its means from eternity? Isn't this the question posed to all men: what kind of existence am I leading: is it a meaningless, absurd, lost and doomed existence? How do I get a redeemed existence so that from A to Z, from birth to death, from God's eternal counsel to his eternal kingdom, I can accept and affirm myself joyfully and enthusiastically? Is the question of eternal predestination not the core of the mystery of our existence?

This question opens a wound, a gaping wound that bleeds and hurts. Good. *That wound is our selfhood. Going to church keeps that wound open.*

To the question, "To what extent is it true?" we might reply with another question: Doesn't it often happen that people are in fact touched inwardly by the magic rod of the Spirit? How did the first Christians come to be Christians? How did our forebears accept the gospel and come to sanctify life and culture? At decisive moments the lightning did strike. And didn't every awakening and revival originate in such a lightning strike? Similarly, this also happens on a scale of one – in the life of the individual. How this happens, even someone so struck cannot say; he is just irresistibly drawn to Christ by the gospel and by the concrete fellowship of the church.

A continuous conversation

There's another possible answer, as well. There is also truth to the idea that there is such a thing as a continuous, ongoing conversion. The one, absolute moment can be spread out over an entire lifetime. We must also be reborn from our deep secularity and godlessness. Again and again, we sink under the sea of despair. Again and again, we need to be pulled up out of the depths. That is also why we go to church regularly.

This is true not just for the individual. There is also conversion on a large scale. Everything in the world and in our situation needs to be put right again and again, like the furniture in our living room after a big party. There is immeasurable chaos, injustice and violence in society, culture, politics and among the nations. Preaching is not just the proclamation of the gospel but also the application of the Word. This pertains to current events. They are put in the right light. In this way they are set right in the order of the kingdom. This, too, is a kind of conversion. This, too, is why we go to church: to get a chance to experience this conversion so that once again we may see what things are really like.

Every marriage needs ongoing enrichment

Lisa M. Petsche

My husband and I celebrated 14 years of marriage last month. We're not much more than newlyweds, though, compared to my parents, who just marked their 44th wedding anniversary.

In today's fast-paced, me-oriented, throwaway society, it's an increasing challenge to keep a marital relationship alive and healthy for a lifetime.

Unfortunately, many people are under the illusion that if only they choose the right mate, their marriage will effortlessly and continuously be wonderful, involving sustained passion and little or no conflict.

Such fairy-tale notions of destined lovers and perfect matches, while appealing, are unrealistic. However, in this era of instant gratification, many people don't want to acknowledge that successful marriages require an ongoing investment of time and effort, or that they involve compromise and sacrifice.

SKJOLD PHOTOGRAPH

Adjusting expectations

In her recent book, *Surrendering to Marriage*, Iris Krasnow contends that even in a good marriage, partners will not feel happy all the time. She urges couples to recognize and accept that feelings of boredom and resentment are a normal part of any long-term relationship, and that there may even be times when we'd like to pack it in. We should interpret these feelings as a sign that we need to work harder at fostering intimacy, not a sign that it's time to move on.

Adjusting our expectations leads to increased marital satisfaction, Krasnow says. When the going gets tough, our understanding that difficulties are inevitable and can be overcome will sustain us. Moreover, the marital bond becomes strengthened through facing challenging times together with determination and faith. (If the relationship develops serious problems, professional help should be sought as soon as possible.)

A primary relationship

As we emphasize in the marriage preparation program I help facilitate, marriage is a primary relationship that needs to have top priority in both spouses' lives. They must make a conscious, ongoing effort to protect it from potentially destructive outside influences, including well-intentioned but sometimes demanding relatives and friends, career advancement and other individual pursuits, technology (satellite television, the Internet, cell phones and pagers) and the popular culture.

Unfortunately, especially once they are parents, partners' lives can easily become so busy that they no longer spend much time communicating on an intimate level. (Talking about the kids and instrumental things like bills and errands doesn't count.) But their relationship, if it's to flourish, must be nurtured on a regular basis, in spite of other obligations.

My husband and I, for example, have been going on monthly dates ever since our first child was born. Usually we go out for dinner or for an evening walk followed by coffee and dessert.

Even if it's not feasible to regularly get a sitter and go out on formal dates, there are many creative ways to build in quality time. It can be as simple as sitting down together to talk about your day after the kids are in bed, instead of automatically turning on the television or computer.

When my sisters and I were young, my parents would periodically postpone their dinner until after we were in bed. They'd order Chinese food and enjoy a distraction-free meal in the dining room, by candlelight. It was a time to really connect and enjoy each other's company.

Marriage Encounter weekends

Attending a Marriage Encounter weekend is another good idea. The program targets couples who have a healthy relationship but would like to enrich it, with emphasis on deepening communication between husband and wife.

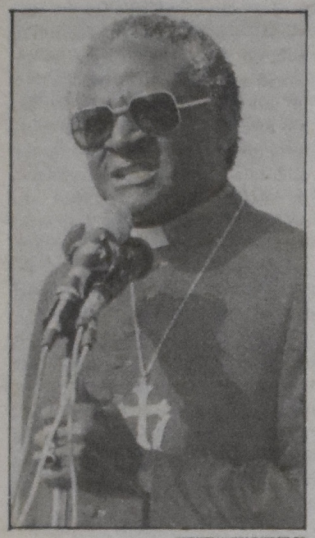
Marriage veterans can attest that loving your partner in an ongoing way is a conscious decision involving activity and continual growth. This long-term commitment to the development of one another, and to building a Christian family together, involves moral and spiritual obligation.

Without question, it's a challenge, but well worth the effort. Because a good marriage is a source of refuge from the trials and tribulations of life, providing fulfilment and joy while mirroring God's unconditional, everlasting love for us.

Especially in this day and age, it's truly an accomplishment of which to be proud.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three, clinical social worker and freelance writer.

Fresh elections in Zimbabwe 'necessary', says Tutu



CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

Desmond Tutu

ALLEN TANNENBAUM, SYGMA

Robert Mugabe

HARARE, Zimbabwe (ENI) — A potential political crisis in Zimbabwe could be averted by a re-run of the country's controversial March presidential election, Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop from South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has said.

The election, which extended President Robert Mugabe's rule for a sixth term, was characterized by international observers as "fundamentally flawed" and fraught with violence and intimidation.

Not free and fair

"Evidence shows that the presidential elections in March were not free and fair and thus the current government cannot regain its legitimacy," Tutu said in a foreword to a report by a coalition of non-governmental organizations. "A new vote with guarantees of fairness and free expression will undoubtedly be necessary."

The country's main opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), has lodged a court challenge to the vote and is planning a mass protest to force a re-election.

Deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Report was issued to the news media on June 27 by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, a grouping of 250 organizations. It describes a deteriorating social, economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. The coalition was launched last year to help civil society "deal with socio-economic and political crises" and to promote "freedom and democratic values" in the country.

"The hard facts on the ground in Zimbabwe, so well-compiled in this report, suggest an alarming array of policies and practices that may be leading the country to a catastrophic future," said Tutu, who in late March criticized the South African government for having endorsed Mugabe's controversial win.

"It is now clear that the resolution to the Zimbabwe crisis can only be found in recapturing the legitimacy of the government and returning the country to a fair and just rule of law."

In an introduction to the report, Pius Ncube, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second biggest city, lamented what he saw as the worsening humanitarian situation in his homeland.

"Over the last two years, I have seen a steady deterioration of respect for human dignity and rights in Zimbabwe," the archbishop said. "In the past two months I have known of a number of persons who have died of hunger right here in my city."

Ncube, who has challenged Mugabe's government on a number of policies, has been severely criticized by Mugabe. The archbishop was accused of leading an anti-government crusade resulting in a heavy loss for Mugabe's Zanu PF political party in Matabeleland, Ncube's province, in the 2000 parliamentary election.

The release of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition report came as a delegation from the African Commission on Human and People's Rights was winding up a six-day probe of alleged human rights violations against supporters of opposition parties, the privately owned press, white commercial farmers and the general population of Zimbabwe by the state and militants of the ruling Zanu PF party.

The commission was created by a charter signed by African heads of state and government. It is expected to issue a report on Zimbabwe at its next meeting, scheduled for October in Gambia.

Worst food crisis

While Zimbabwe is experiencing its worst food crisis in decades, the government ordered 2900 commercial farmers to stop work last week, although the police have given them a reprieve until August.

The government intends to seize the farms, including crops in the fields, for re-distribution to its supporters as part of a land reform program.

The World Food Program (WFP) estimates that nearly half of the country's 12.5million people will need food aid this year due to famine caused in part by government-backed farm invasions which have sabotaged food production, undermining the once-thriving agricultural industry.

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Memories of VBS

Intangible Things
Heidi VanDerSlikke

This week I helped out briefly with registration for the Vacation Bible School program. On a hot summer morning, dozens of kids thundered into the church, bringing an excitement with them, soon generating an almost electric atmosphere of anticipation. We tagged them all with colored construction paper and sent them into the sanctuary. Boisterous singing drifted out into the foyer. Then the puppet appeared up front and suddenly the rowdy audience settled down to listen with rapt attention while the theme for the week was introduced. My job completed, I wandered out the door to return quite happily to the relative peace and quiet of home. I thought back on what VBS had meant to me over the years.

As a kid, it was an annual event I looked forward to each summer. In a really good year you might take part in two programs held at different churches in town. I'll admit it wasn't just the Bible stories that drew me in. With both parents working and my best friend visiting her grandmother every July and August, I spent a lot of time on my own. VBS was a welcome break from a lonely routine. I savored every bit of it, from the Bible songs to the warm Kool-Aid and melting cookies. And what a delight to tear around at recess and then rejoin an entire class of sweaty eight-year-olds, to listen quietly to the Bible lesson for the day.

Creating significant works of art

I especially enjoyed creating significant works of art from macaroni and toilet paper rolls. My all-time favorite craft was a plaster of Paris plaque. We weren't allowed to take it home until after the Friday night program. I couldn't wait to show it to my parents, neither of whom were able to attend that evening. My VBS teacher wrapped it lovingly in paper toweling and gave me a hug as she sent me off. I clutched my treasure tightly all the way. Too tightly I guess. When I unwrapped it at home the plaque was in two pieces, (just like my wee heart), Moses forever separated from the burning bush.

Some of those teachers must have wondered why, exactly, they had given up a week of their summer to contend with lippy little girls like me. I can only hope they were charmed by my curly blonde head and the light of curiosity in my eyes. For the most part they dealt patiently with my steady stream of questions. I wish I could tell those faithful volunteers how crucial their answers were. Like the time I demanded to know why Jesus was more important than the rich young ruler. The answer was simple but profound, "Because Jesus was the Son of God." The weight of that statement hit me like a ton of plaster plaques and has stayed with me all these years. It was the first time anyone had ever bothered to tell me that particular truth.

Changing places

Later in life I also did time as a VBS teacher. My first year, they gave me the oldest group because no one else wanted to take them on. I had maybe 10 kids to work with, nine of whom were there for the popsicle stick lampshades we made that week and one whose mission was to repay me for the sins of my youth.

His name was Kevin and his short-term goal was to make me pull out large amounts of my own hair. However, I had more experience as a tormentor than as a victim. After two days I felt we had a working relationship. By Wednesday, Kevin volunteered for the leading role in our class contribution to the closing program. I wasn't sure if he was sincere, or setting me up for my biggest fall yet. Reluctantly I agreed to give him the part, all the while formulating a "Plan B" in case he stood me up.

Kevin was there early on Friday night, wearing his father's bathrobe, a tea towel dramatically draped across his head. I convinced him that the sunglasses were overkill, even though the skit was set in the desert. He delivered each of his lines with flair and surprising accuracy. This from a child who hadn't memorized a single one of the assigned Bible verses all week. I drove him home that night, watching as he tenderly carried his Popsicle stick lampshade up the front steps.

It was the last I ever saw of Kevin. I have no idea how his life turned out. But I know this: for a few special days, God sent this grubby kid with attitude into my life. And it was my very great privilege to tell him, as best I could, that Jesus was the Son of God. What could be more important?

Heidi VanDerSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont.

'Baje dankie'

Morris N. Greidanus

It was a unique experience for this June's Christian Reformed Church synod to hear from a white South African delegate again. We broke relations with them over their support of apartheid several years ago. But after all the changes in South Africa, Dr. Willie Botha of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa came to this synod as their first fraternal delegate after the official end to apartheid.

'We were wrong!'

He reflected briefly on the pain of the years that we were separate. One June he was in Grand Rapids for a meeting during a synod, but he was not greeted. He felt shunned and it hurt. But it also made the South African church think hard about its theological support of apartheid. In fact, the break with the CRC and the disapproval by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches caused this leading South African church to reconsider its support for the apartheid regime. Dr. Botha frankly admitted: "We were wrong!" And once they knew they were wrong, they repented and began to speak to their members in the government, and apartheid came apart.

Now he came to us as a penitent sinner returning home. No angry accusations why we couldn't wait for them to sort this out in their own sweet time. No, he thanked us for the admonition, and was happy to be back with us. He thanked us!

Thanks for the discipline

"*Baje dankie, mates*" (Afrikaans: "thank you very much") had been his closing words to the Australian Reformed Church, and that was his approach to us. He saw us as sisters and brothers, thanked us for the discipline, and was glad to be back.

The synod rose to applaud his words with overtones of the return of the prodigal son in our hearts and minds. We shook his hand, or hugged Willie Botha home again. This was a great experience of things going better than expected: one synod took a hard step, this synod saw real change and rejoiced in it.

We also learned that times are difficult for the church in South Africa and that many members are emigrating. The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa continues to need our prayers.

And perhaps we could ask ourselves now what we could learn from the Dutch Reformed Church besides their humble acceptance of correction.

It strikes me that their Truth and Reconciliation Committees could only have arisen in a gospel context. Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela put much faith in the healing power of speaking the truth about our sins. They believed that it would be healing for the policeman who could confess his brutal treatment of prisoners. And even reconciling the victims or their survivors.

Speaking truth carefully

Our own statements and admissions of racism are usually not that believingly daring. A statement distributed at the synod in connection with the 2002 Multiethnic Conference qualified its observations with a sprinkling of "most whites", "most people of color," and "often state." We have to speak carefully and cannot speak the truth as we see it. And so this "anti-racism initiative" observed that "true Christ-centred unity and community across society, including within the CRC, is hampered because ethnic and racial groups tend not to trust each other at a basic level."

Because of this lack of trust, we have not come as far as South Africa in admitting our failures. Are we afraid that our admission will be used against us as an accusation?

Car insurance companies (except in no-fault states or provinces) warn drivers not to admit anything if they are in an accident. Corporations that are being sued take the same approach. But I recently heard a report that even in litigation it is helpful to admit your error.

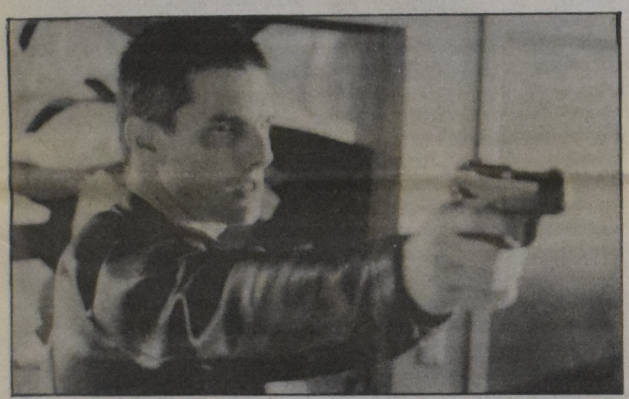
Admitting our faults

Some lawyers have concluded that customers who have been hurt or damaged want their pain or injury recognized. They want to hear that the company is sorry. Money for damages is secondary. Since the Toro Lawnmower Company took the approach of apologizing to unhappy customers and promising to make things right, their costs for damages are less than when they defended themselves to the costly end.

Admitting our faults frankly is another healing truth we learn from South Africa, and for that we should say: "Baje dankie!"

Morris Greidanus is a Canadian-American living in Grand Rapids, Mich. He has served at First CRC, Grand Rapids, since 1985.

Minority Report: *the eyes have it*



DREAMWORKSFANSITE.COM

Tom Cruise gets in touch with his masculine side.

... continued from page 7

plot turn at the end is disappointing in its neatness.

There is something fitting intellectually in Anderton's discovery that it is his mentor who has betrayed him. The direction given to his life by his mentor and the Precrime project is indeed, as the films's imagery suggests, ultimately a form of blindness. Anderton must lose his eyes in order to see.

Movie betrays itself

But at a deeper level the viewer senses that this elaborate plot hatched by the great mentor to cover up his primal crime doesn't make much sense if analyzed too closely. It is merely a clever turn of plot created by the writer to make the movie "add up" and to come to a "logical" resolution that ties up all the loose ends.

In this way, the movie betrays itself in the end. By relying on clever plot ordering, it does the same thing to us, the viewers, that has been done to Anderton: it seduces us with images of a blind man coming to insight to give us an illusion of spiritual insight. But in the film's resolution we sense that we have actually been diverted from an authentic account of insight into the human condition and away from a genuine reconciliation.

Though the film gestures toward a reconciliation between the masculine and feminine, as the tough cop, Anderton needs the help of three women to solve the mystery of his own "crime", the plot succumbs to this drive to make it all "add up" as a clever story. That is to say, it imposes order in the same way Anderton and the Agency did at the beginning of the film.

Life, it seems, does after all turn out to be explicable in terms of a this-worldly chain of causes and effects. Although it raises some important themes, making it a film worth seeing, ultimately *Minority Report* subverts itself.

Barna: Christians adrift in doctrinal beliefs

Tim Ellsworth (BP)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Only 43 perc ent of Baptists believe that works don't earn salvation and 66 per cent believe Satan isn't a real being, according to a study by the Barna Research Group.

The study explored the religious beliefs of the U.S.'s 12 largest denominations and determined that only 41 per cent of adults in those denominations could be classified as "born again."

A striking indictment

"The Barna report is a credible perspective on the state of Christian conviction in America today," said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "The report is a striking indictment of the loss of doctrinal confidence and the erosion of biblical beliefs that marks American Christianity."

The study's findings identify an alarmingly high number of church members whose beliefs fall far short of orthodox Christianity. For example, 41 per cent of all adults surveyed believed in the total accuracy of the Bible. Catholics had the lowest percentage (23 per cent) who believed the Bible to be accurate, while 81 per cent of those attending Pentecostal churches held to the same belief. Only 40 per cent of those surveyed believed Christ was sinless, while 27 per cent believed Satan to be real.

"The trends Barna traces have been progressing for several years," Mohler said. "Americans have been negotiating away the core doctrines of the Christian faith — all the while claiming to remain Christians. But Christianity is defined by certain definite and non-negotiable doctrines. Without these, there is no Christianity at all — just the emptying sanctuaries of declining churches and denominations."

The numbers were better for Baptists than for the whole sample, but not by much. Of the Baptists surveyed, 57 per cent believed works play a part in salvation, and 45 per cent believed Jesus was not sinless. Only 34 per cent of Baptists thought Satan was a real being, while 51 per cent believed Christians have the responsibility to witness to others. Sixty-six per cent of Baptists considered the Bible to be totally accurate, 81 per cent considered their religious faith to be important and 85 per cent believed God is the all-powerful creator of the universe.

The two denominations with the highest number of members who hold to orthodox Christian beliefs were Pentecostals and Assemblies of God. Catholics and Episcopalians had the lowest percentage of members reporting a belief in traditional Christian teachings. Just 20 per cent of Episcopalians and 17 per cent of Catholics believed Satan was real; 33 per cent of Catholics and Episcopalians believed Jesus was sinless; and 26 per cent of Episcopalians and nine per cent of Catholics believed works don't earn salvation.

"The Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy," Barna said. "How else can you describe matters when most churchgoing adults reject the accuracy of the Bible, reject the existence of Satan, claim that Jesus sinned, see no need to evangelize, believe that good works are one of the keys to persuading God to forgive their sins and describe their commitment to Christianity as moderate or even less firm?"

World News

Hindu circular in India encourages violence toward Christians

Alex Buchan

LONDON (Compass) — Raping Christian women during riots, selling Christian girls into the flesh trade, recruiting doctors to dispense poisoned drugs and assassinating anti-caste activists — these are only four of 34 anti-Christian tactics recommended in a chilling and confidential circular from India's elite Hindu extremist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

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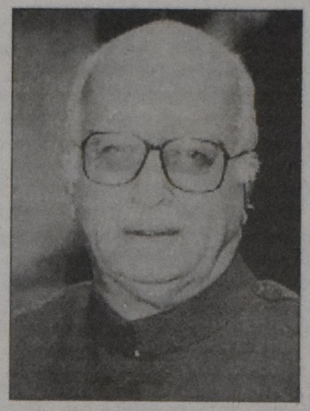

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (above) and Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani (right).

Burned and destroyed

With instructions that "this paper is to be burned and destroyed after passing these instructions along," the undated RSS circular, is believed to have been in circulation for two years and originates from the RSS headquarters in Nagpur, Maharashtra state. Sent to local RSS operatives, it recommends a series of mostly illegal tactics to spread Hindutva, the extremist ideology that demands India become a Hindu state.

"It frightens me that the leaders of our country, while telling the world they respect freedom of religion, are really working for an organization that has no problem killing, raping and poisoning those of other religions to advance their agenda of Hindu extremism," said a pastor in New Delhi. "This is a wake-up call to the church. We cannot argue that persecution is just a spontaneous over-reaction of a few Hindus to over-aggressive evangelism, but it is a carefully planned chaos originating from the Hindu extremists themselves, with the long-term implications all worked out."

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani are both leading members of the 750,000-member RSS, which directs the many other organizations that serve the Hindu extremist agenda, including the governing political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Terror campaign

The four-page circular, in the form of a memo, calls for a terror campaign to be waged against tribals, Backward castes, Muslims and Christians. Detailed instructions are given that include violence. Article 7 calls for "induction of Christian/Muslim girls into flesh trades." Article 11 calls for "mass rapes of Muslim/Christian women during riots ... no mercy to friends and acquaintances." Article 32 calls for "killing of anti-Hindus and anti-Brahmins to continue. Disposal of bodies as per direction." In other words, if a Christian condemns the Brahminical form of Hinduism, which insists that the poor stay in low castes, they are a legitimate target for assassination.

Strategy for persecution

Yet the violence is not confined to riots, rape, or assassination. Almost incredibly, Article 4 calls for doctors to be recruited and induced to inject newborn Christian babies with diseases that will handicap them. The full article states, "Promotion of Hindutva among doctors and chemists, disposal of expired and specious drugs to Christians, tribals and Muslims. Injection for handicapping newborn Christians ...."

The circular contains a total strategy for persecuting, weakening and marginalizing the Christian, tribal and Muslim communi- ties through economic boycotts, media onslaughts and conflict provocation.

This includes the deliberate plan to starve non-Hindu groups. Article 26 calls for "malnutrition of Christians to continue. Liquor poisoning as per direction. Food poisoning to continue."

Said a pastor after reading this, "This is sheer fascism, the kind of ethnic cleansing that went on in Bosnia, and it's all happening in a so-called democracy receiving lots of Western aid."

Lies recommended

In the propaganda area, lies are recommended. Article 12 calls for local RSS leaders to "place images/idols under the ground near non-Hindu religious structures ... new literature to be fabricated to prove all old churches ... are old Hindu structures." This has proved a durable tactic. As one pastor in Bangalore put it, "The easiest way to get a mob together to destroy a church is to say that it has been built on a Hindu site."

Indeed, one could argue that the entire electoral fortunes of the BJP were built on this tactic, when Advani raised thousands of disgruntled Hindus to storm the Babri Masjid mosque in December 1992, triggering massive tension that swept the BJP into power in 1996 and 1998. He claimed the mosque was built over the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram.

Of course, none of these tactics will come as a surprise to India's Christian community. But the actual documentation proving that much of the recent persecution against them originates at the highest level and is meticulously planned is significant. The RSS is an extremely secretive organization and only rarely do internal and highly confidential circulars fall into Christian hands.

Three significant areas

The significance of the circular can been seen in at least three areas, according to a group of India watchers polled by Compass.

First, the church at large needs to awaken to how well organized the Hindu extremists are. They have funds, long-term vision and utter ruthlessness in the pursuit of their aims.

Second, it shows that the Hindu extremist leaders are not just about motivating mobs to intimidate Christian evangelists — the kind of incident that dominates persecution reporting.

Ruthless men in high places

As one India watcher said, "The persecution of Christians in India is not primarily about mobs letting off steam. It's about ruthless men in high places changing a culture of tolerance into a culture of intolerance by carefully crafted lies and cleverly creating chaos."

Third, it should help other nations to realize how serious a problem the RSS-inspired violence is against religious minorities. Western nations have been slow to register the fact that as of the late 1990s, India is among the world's worst countries for the killing of Christians. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reckons that since the BJP formed the majority in the national government in 1998, there have been over 100 deaths of Christians at the hands of Hindu extremists and well over 1,000 acts of anti-Christian violence.

Not all of India's 40-million-plus Christians are in the firing line. The violence is targeted at the evangelists and those working to empower the lower castes. But the level of violence is expected to rise throughout the rest of this year as the BJP returns to a more nationalistic agenda to regain votes.

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Thousands of Christians forcibly 'reconverted' to Hinduism

Abhijeet Prabhu

BANGALORE, India (Compass) — Over 5,000 Christians have been reconverted to Hinduism by the militant World Hindu Council (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or VHP) during the past two years, and Christian leaders claim the reconversions are forced. The VHP is an organization that is increasingly being supported for its anti-Christian activities by expatriate Hindus from Britain and the United States, sources revealed.

The VHP released the figures in mid June, proudly claiming that over the past two years Christians from the Oram, Munda and Khadia tribes in the Sundargarh district of Orissa province in northeast India have been reconverted to Hinduism.

Sundargarh has a population of two million, of which over 400,000 are Christians. There are over 1,100 churches in that district.

The VHP claims that they do not force the Christians to reconvert, but that the conversion of a Christian to Hinduism must be seen as a "homecoming." They said the conversions came as a result of mobile health programs that have been launched to counter Christian medical work in that district.

Ready to die for their religion

Meanwhile, the VHP is seeking applicants for Hindu evangelists. The applicants must be "resolute Hindus, ready to die for their religion."

Ironically, the VHP wants to recruit its evangelists from the state of Kerala. According to the VHP, more than 80 per cent of India's Christian missionaries hail from Kerala, and the VHP thinks that its evangelistic cadre could marshal a fitting reply.

After a month-long training program, the Hindu recruits will be dispatched to tribal areas to stop conversions to Christianity.

Christian leaders have two objections to these reconversion drives. First, they claim the conversions themselves are coerced, because the VHP uses intimidation and violence in the villages. Second, the tribals — who mostly became Christians 100 years ago — were never Hindus in the first place, making it nonsense to talk of their "homecoming" to the Hindu faith.

The Global Council of Indian Christians has demanded an inquiry into the conversions.

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

NOTHING IS MORE unpredictable than stock markets. No, let me qualify that: they are just like us, but then even more so: highly sensitive to moods, one moment *'Himmelhoch jauchzent'* jubilating to the highest heavens, and the next *'zum Tode betruebt'*, deadly devastated. One good statistic and the market soars; one bad report and the index plummets.

I can even extend the comparison to human health and suggest that, just like people, the market gets sick and can even suffer from a deadly disease, as happened in the late 1920s. More about that later.

History never repeats itself, but people do, making the same errors, so a market crash caused by human greed is bound to happen sooner than later. Just as there was no apparent cause when, on that fateful Black Monday, October 28, 1929, the Stock Market collapsed, heralding the onset of the Great Depression, so, too, the next one may come without a warning and for no immediate reason. As history has repeatedly shown, assurances from bankers and brokers are actually danger signs.

THAT A FINANCIAL calamity is not impossible was confirmed to me by a graph I saw in the British weekly *The Economist*. It compared the history of the Japanese stock market — which peaked in December, 1989 — to its American counterpart — which saw its high in March, 2000. Both the rise and the fall of these two indexes have been ominously similar. More than 12 years after the Japanese bubble burst, its economy is still in recession. Japan's saving grace has been its high savings rate: the average family there has some $100,000 in the proverbial old sock under the mattress, as they don't trust their own banks anymore. The scary part in the U.S.A. is that, come a deep drop in the general share prices, people there have nothing to fall back on: like badly brought up, spoiled children, they have wasted their money on useless trinkets, as if there never would be a rainy tomorrow. Even worse: most people are in debt.

Prior to the Tokyo Nikkei reaching its top, Japanese leaders were being praised for having a superior system, and the world flocked to the land of the Rising Sun to observe its miraculous market. The Japanese started to see themselves as a super race and openly ridiculed the West, calling us spoiled, lazy, degenerate and incompetent. It seems to me that, lately, the U.S.A. is going through a similar bout of chest pounding.

Japanese firms in the late 1980s also used deceptive accounting practices to hide financial problems. Now the latest *TIME* magazine cover loudly screams "The $3.8 Billion WorldCom Rip-off," calling it the biggest bookkeeping deception in history. Just one in a series.

SOMETHING IS DRASTICALLY amiss in a world where we, in North America, spend more on lawn maintenance than the Government of India, with a population of 1.2 billion, collects in federal Income Tax. In a world where all see television, this means danger. In a few decades we have gone from a world of minimal and manageable risks to one of huge and out of hand dangers, of which September 11 was only a symptom. Canada is too small to solve the big problems of the world, while the U.S.A. is big enough, but refuses to see them. So the madness of disparity, dislocation and dispossession that has caused this cancer continues unchecked.

The economy has become like the weather: hot, too hot, for a while. Cold, too cold, the next. Floods here. Droughts there. Whether weather-wise or on money-matters, nobody is an expert anymore. We all grope in the dark. Will Japan's bank debts — trillions of dollars — cause a world-wide crisis? Will the trillions of dollars Americans owe to foreigners trigger a collapse? Nobody knows, but festering fears linger. We are uncertain, more so than ever before. That is a terrible admission for a generation that prides itself on being the most advanced in history.

A few weeks ago the U.S. president was in New York, trying to reassure the financial world, hurt by fraud. I try to study body language, for apparently we convey more there than we do with what we say. When Bush was in Kananaskis, I observed him in the background, repeatedly tapping his fingers on the table, suggesting impatience with the proceedings, finding them boring and wishing the shortest G8 session was over so that he could go home and do his regular daily run or catch up on some sleep. I might have done likewise. When the president spoke to America's financial movers and shakers in the Big Apple, I turned off the sound and watched his gestures and face. He has that sardonic smile that belies his words, negating any possible impact. And, true, his appearance was a waste of time.

THE BIG QUESTION IS: Will his popularity go the way of the stock market, and does this herald a major economic re-alignment as *The Economist* has suggested? Are there more signs that our economic future is in jeopardy?

For an answer to that question I turned to John Kenneth Galbraith, economist, ambassador, Harvard professor. Ontario-born, of basketball player size, he also is a towering figure in the publishing world, with scores of best sellers to his name.

He is 20 years older than I am minus one day, and, although his lanky figure is now somewhat bent, his intellect has not suffered. Even now, at 93, he has a new book on the go, with the up-to-date title of *The Economics of Innocent Fraud*. President Bush also tried to deal with a symptom of fraud, the not-so-innocent kind. He came to Wall Street to combat unacceptable accounting practices, in which he is an expert. That's how he got elected, say his opponents, who now also point out that his wealth, too, was ill-gotten by using 'inside information', secret knowledge of the company of which he was a director and selling his shares before a big loss was reported. So, yes, no politician was better qualified to discuss foul business dealings, and no person was less qualified to be convincing.

When questioned about his questionable dealings, Bush said that in the corporate world things aren't always black and white as far as accounting is concerned, which sounded uncharacteristic for the man who sees the world at large in sharp contrast: good or evil; "if not for us, you are against us." It seems that, when it comes to the very rich who gave $100 million to get him elected, a lot of grey is allowed.

ARE WE LIVING ON THE brink of a major financial catastrophe? Of course not, say the experts. What else can they say? I think it is proper to see what did happen prior to the 20th century major economic break down.

Back to Galbraith, who in 1955 wrote *The Great Crash 1929*. In it, he said that the causes of the Great Depression are still far from certain. Yet he lists five glaring weaknesses, also evident today:

1) The bad distribution of income. In 1929 the average Chief Executive Officer (CEO) made 40 times more than the average wage earner. Today this ratio is an obscene 500: 1.

2) The bad corporate structure. Then, fraud ran into the millions; now it is in the billions. The more bosses earn, the more they cheat, apparently.

3) The bad banking structure. In the Dirty Thirties, thousands of banks failed, adding to the misery. Today even the most talented experts have difficulty reading the balance sheets of our banks. What is known is that the bad debts of banks in Japan and China alone could cause a major economic disruption.

4) The dubious state of the foreign balance. In 1914-18, America became the world's greatest creditor. It financed the war and, in the end, most countries owed the U.S. money. When war debts went into default and exports fell, the U.S. became a net debtor. Something similar happened during World War II: again the U.S. was financially on top of the world. Since 1990, a momentous reversal has taken place: now the U.S. has the world's greatest foreign debt. The 1929 imbalance is peanuts compared to the trillions owed today.

5) The poor state of economic intelligence. In November 1929 Mr Hoover, the then American president, announced a cut in taxes, especially in the higher income brackets. Today this same error has been repeated by the current American president. Reducing taxes for a privileged group creates larger inequality, an original cause of the depression.

Galbraith's book is now almost 50 years old, when credit card use was minimal and consumer debt manageable. In 1929, most people paid cash. Today debt is at an all-time high and rapidly increasing.

No wonder there is a lot of uncertainty. Uncertainty breeds caution, the opposite of the euphoria that fed the boom of yesteryear. So, my financial advice for what it is worth: buy a piece of land in the country. Build an energy efficient house and keep in shape. If — when — the economy tanks, there won't be money for expensive healthcare: there, too, become self-sufficient, as prevention is the best medicine.

Too simple a solution? I agree. But then it is even more ludicrous to believe that in the end, when the crunch comes, the human race will see the folly of its ways, will make an abrupt about-face and become unselfish, content, ungreedy, benevolent and understanding. Frankly I am too much of a Calvinist to believe that.

Seventy years ago, an economic fiasco reduced millions to poverty and caused Hitler's rise to power in Germany. History never repeats itself, but people do. Will our madness, evident in our march of folly, lead us?

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont.

CHILDREN AND MENTAL HEALTH

How to help kids deal with stress

(NC)—Modern life is faster and more stressful than ever. To cope, many resort to dreaming of their happy childhood days. But for a surprising number of people, this kind solace is unavailable. Childhood can be a very difficult time. Children experience stress just like adults do, and this needs to be recognized. Family conflict, domestic violence, divorce, constant school changes, new neighborhoods and child care arrangements, peer pressure, and bullying all contribute to childhood angst.

Here are a few things that parents can do to help their children deal with stress:

- Monitor and modify their own stress levels
- Keep communication lines open. Let your kids know what's going on
- Encourage friendships by scheduling play dates, sleepovers, and other fun activities
- Remember that children need quiet down time to as well as time to play

For more facts about mental illness and how a book called "Catch a Falling Star: A Tale from the Iris the Dragon Series" is helping parents identify and understand early onset mental illness visit www.iristhedragon.com.

- News Canada

Indonesia: Papuan Christians fear onslaught

INDONESIA (Missions Insider) — Now that the Laskar Jihad has wreaked its terror in Maluku, North Maluku and Sulawesi provinces of Indonesia, Christians now fear the next outbreak of violence will be in Papua (Irian Jaya), as the following report from Barnabas Fund (**www.barnabasfund.org**) indicates:

Christians in the Indonesian province of Papua are fearful that a violent campaign could be unleashed against them later this year as Laskar Jihad Islamic militants continue to flood into the province with the apparent collusion of the authorities.

Military instruction in mosques

A recent report from Australia's Uniting Church, details the concerns of local Christians, who make up more than 70 per cent of the province's population. A number of Laskar Jihad military training camps are now situated in the province, and military instruction is now taking place quite openly in the compounds of some mosques every afternoon. In the area of Fak Fak more than 175 boats carrying Laskar Jihad personnel and equipment are said to have arrived along the coast since April. Meanwhile several Christians have reported discovering stockpiles of weapons, which they fear could be used against them later this year.

A number of Pakistani and Afghan *mujahadeen*, who are thought to have come to join in the *jihad* against local Christians, have been sighted. Laskar Jihad's magazine, which contains articles attacking Christians, Jews and the U.S., is now being sold openly in markets in Papua, and T-shirts, DVDs and books on Osama bin Laden are also on sale.

Laskar Jihad is reportedly forming links with local authorities, police and army units, and with the pro-Jakarta militia Satgas Merah Putih which opposes Papuan calls for independence from Indonesia. Laskar Jihad is also believed to be insinuating itself with the local Muslim population, although the majority of Papuan Muslims still reject the Jihad's presence as a dangerous destabilizing factor in an already extremely tense region. Local Christians believe the failure of police and army units to stop Laskar Jihad from expanding its military campaign into Papua implies complicity in the Jihad's activities.

Four Laskar Jihad members carrying homemade guns were recently seized by Christians and handed over to the authorities, but no action was taken against them. Others who have reported Laskar Jihad activities to the authorities say that they have been harassed, threatened with arrest themselves, and have even received intimidating phone calls late at night.

Melanesian West Papua was annexed by Indonesia in 1963, since which time the majority Christian Papuan people have struggled for their independence from repressive Indonesian rule. The arrival of the Laskar Jihad, which since May 2000 has been responsible for murdering, or forcibly converting and circumcising thousands of Christians in a genocidal holy war in Indonesia's Moluccas and Sulawesi regions, has prompted fears that the group could be used as a militia by the military to repress the local Melanesian Christian population.

During its occupation of East Timor, Indonesia gained international notoriety for allowing pro-Indonesian militias to brutally terrorize the local Timorese population with impunity. Now Papua's Christians fear that Laskar Jihad will be given a free hand to do the same there.

***For other information about persecution of Christians in Indonesia, see stories in back issues of Missions Insider on their website,* www.christianaid. org.**

New evangelization depends on faith-culture dialogue, says Pope

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) — John Paul II recently emphasized the importance of dialogue between the Church and the different cultures, for the sake of both the new evangelization and the very future of humanity. He expressed this conviction in a message written for the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Causes, consequences of religious indifference

"Since the beginning of my pontificate, I have taken advantage of every opportunity to emphasize the importance of the dialogue between the Church and cultures," John Paul stated. "It is a vital realm not only for the new evangelization and the inculturation of the faith, but also for the world's destiny and the future of humanity."

John Paul II created the Pontifical Council for Culture to promote the encounter between the salvific Gospel message and present cultures. Since then, it has particularly studied the causes and consequences posed for the Christian faith by religious indifference and the lack of faith.

Faith must become culture

In his message, the Pope analyzed the changing thought patterns and customs of societies over the past 20 years, verifying that "modern communication technologies have had a marked effect on man's relations with nature, as well as with himself and with others. Globalization itself, which initially was related to the economic realm, has become for the present a phenomenon that also affects other sectors of human life."

John Paul then repeated one of the characteristic phrases of his pontificate, which he coined at the opening of this Pontifical Council: "A faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully accepted, not fully thought out, not lived faithfully."

Christian retirement village expands

PHOTOS COURTESY TOLLENDALE VILLAGE

Left: A ribbon is cut by Ken Mitchell, at age 91, the oldest resident in Bethany Gables, at the new residence's official opening. Right: MPP Joe Tascona and John Kassies unveil a bronze plaque.

BARRIE, Ont. – On June 21, 2002, Tollendale Village, a Christian Retirement Village located in Barrie, Ont., celebrated the official opening of Bethany Gables, it's second phase of development, reports Tollendale Village management in a press release.

In attendance for this special event were more than 250 members, residents and friends, as well as numerous dignitaries, including MPP Joe Tascona, Mayor Jim Perri, Past-Mayor Janice Laking, Alderman Allison Eadie. John Kassies, vice-chairman of the Board of Directors, welcomed everyone to the event and introduced the various dignitaries, who delivered greetings and congratulations from the Province of Ontario and the City of Barrie.

Tascona and Kassies then unveiled a bronze plaque which noted that Bethany Gables was officially opened on June 21, 2002, and also included the following scripture verse: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" (Ps. 90:1).

After the unveiling of the plaque, the ribbon was cut by Mr. Ken Mitchell, at age 91, the oldest resident in Bethany Gables, with the Board of Directors and dignitaries at his side.

Rev. Don French, also a resident of Tollendale Village, gave the prayer of dedication and another resident, Rev. Peter Meyer, asked for a blessing on the food that was then served. All in attendance then enjoyed the food prepared by the dining room staff, as well as the donations of food provided by attendees.

Bethany Gables is a 66-unit apartment building, and brings the total number of units in Tollendale Village to 132 apartments and 20 Garden Homes. Tollendale Village anticipates that construction on Phase 3 and 4 will start later this summer, bringing the total number of units to 264 apartments and 20 Garden Homes.

In addition, a large community centre, consisting of a 450-seat auditorium, 100 seat dining room and a medical centre will be constructed at the same time, as well as an extension to the underground parking garage capable of accommodating 100 vehicles. At this time, approximately 85 per cent of Phase 3, and 45 per cent of Phase 4 have already been reserved.

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Anniversaries

1962 August 17 2002

"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."
Psalm 100:5

With praise and thanksgiving to God we are happy to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

MINNE and ANNIE VAN DER MOLEN (nee-Elzinga)

May God continue to bless you.
With love from all of us:
Stuart & Henrietta Heeg - *Hagersville*
Rachel, Tara, Stanley, Andrew
Ray & Brenda Van Der Molen - *Jarvis*
Dennis, Aaron, Kristin, Leanne
Bruce Van Der Molen - *Jarvis*
David & Agnes Van Der Molen - *Elmira*

Open House on **August 17**, 2002 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at Parkview Meadows Retirement Village, 72 Town Centre Drive, Townsend, Ontario.
Home Address:
R.R. #1 Jarvis, ON, N0A 1J0.

HENRY & LENIE RHEBERGEN (nee Vreugdenhil)

were married August 3, 1962, in Trenton, Ontario. Love and congratulations from your children and grandchildren. We thank the Lord for the many years he has given you.
Bonnie & Clint Hall - *Cobourg, ON*
Robert, Maria, John, Brooke
Judy & Dan Zandstra - *Highland IN*
Cameron, Madeline
Colin Rae - *Frankford, ON*;
Kim - *Ottawa, ON*
Philip (deceased)
Christina & Troy Rhodes - *South Bend, IN* - Isaac
Patricia - *Whitby, ON*
Home Address: RR 1 Baltimore, Ontario K0K 1C0.

1962 September 7 2002

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."
Galatians 6:2

With thankfulness to God, we announce the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents

SIEBOLT and ANNIE SIERTSEMA (nee Van Oenen)

Marjorie Siertsema
Jim & Rebecca Siertsema
Nancy & Peter DeHaan
You are welcome to join us for an **Open House** Monday, **August 5**, 2002, 2-4 p.m. at the Blyth Christian Reformed Church, Blyth, Ontario.
Home Address:
R.R.#1 Auburn, Ontario N0M 1E0

1962 August 24 2002

With thanksgiving and praise to God, we

TED and JANE BRUINSMA (nee Drost)

hope to celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary along with our children and grandchildren:
Ken & Georgina Bruinsma-Cajic - *Toronto, ON* - Hali, Annalise
Monica & Steve Chokly - *Trenton, ON*
Catherine, Rebecca, Derek
Heather & Simon Williams - *London, England*
Anita Bruinsma - *Toronto, ON*
Home Address: 96 Elgin Dr., Brampton, ON L6Y 2E8

1952 August 21 2002

With praise and thanksgiving to God we are proud to announce the 50th anniversary of

RALPH and LOTTIE EYK

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them both in the years ahead.
With love from your children and grandchildren:
Janet & Roy Voorberg - *Burlington*
Lorraine, Sandra & Erik Mulder, Kevin
Yvonne & Ralph Kikkert - *Dundas*
Nicole, Tracy, Nathan, Aimee
Annette & Ian McKay - *Brampton*
Zachary
Ron & Caroline Eyk - *Beamsville*
Heather, Mark
An **Open House** will be held at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church, 290 Main St. East, Grimsby Ontario, D.V. **August 24th** 2002 from 2:00 p.m. till 4:00 p.m.
Home address: 4471 Ontario St., Beamsville, ON L0R 1B5

1977 2002

"In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths."
Proverbs 3:6

With thanksgiving and praise to God we

JERRY and JANE HAANSTRA (nee Buursma)

along with our children
Jennifer & Tim DeVries (boyfriend)
Jason & Stephanie Bekendam (girlfriend)
Janine, Janelle, Janice
celebrated our 25th Wedding Anniversary on July 12, 2002 in an evening of Praise and Worship.
Dad and Mom, it is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless you both with health and happiness for many more years, and that your loving example to all of us continues to shine.
Love the kids!
Home Address: 798 Highland Rd E Stoney Creek, Ont L8J 3G8

From CC Staff: We received an incomplete fax - only part of the 2nd page. We are running the information that we have.

GERRIT and GRACE are having an **Open House** to celebrate their anniversary. Please join them at their home on 673 Westover Rd. on **August 19th** from 1 - 4 p.m.
Best wishes only please.

Obituaries

November 11,1925 July 1, 2002

"For by grace you have been saved through faith."

On July 01, 2002 our Lord called home our beloved wife, mother and grandmother

ROELY DEVRIES (nee MOESKER)

She longed to be with the Lord in heaven and this now is our comfort as we mourn her death. Beloved wife of Harm and dear mother of:
Bob & Trudy - *Glen Williams, ON*
Marvin & Peggy - *Mount Brydges, ON*
Harry & Mary - *Ancaster, ON*
Joyce & Eduard - *Ladner, BC*
and 15 grandchildren.
Service of remembrance and worship was held on July 4, 2002 at the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church.
Mailing address: 1812 Sawmill Road Caledonia, Ontario N3W 2G9

Obituaries

September 20, 1925 June 28, 2002

Sassenheim Terrace B.C.

Peacefully in Terrace View Hospital, our dear wife, mother, grandma and great-grandma

PHILIPPINA HENDRIKA BRAAM (nee VANDERKWAAK)

went to her Lord, and to her eternal home. Beloved wife of Casey Braam, and dear mother to:
Marianne Kormendy - *Terrace*
Ralph Braam - *Terrace*
Janette & Henry - *St. Albert, AB*
Yvonne & Bill - *Terrace*
John Braam - *Terrace*
Harold & Maria - *Terrace*
Phyllis & David - *Terrace*
Gordon & Tracy Braam - *Lethbridge AB*
Philippina was grandmother to 14 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren. She was diagnosed a year and a half ago with Parkinson's disease, and was hospitalized almost a year ago. She passed away June 28, 2002. She will be greatly missed.
Correspondence address:
C.Braam, 4518 North Sparks St.
Terrace, BC. V8G 2W5

Job Opportunity

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ROSA FLORA is an expanding grower of fresh cut flowers in Dunnville, looking for **FULL TIME** greenhouse workers to start about the 3rd week of August. The schedule is Monday to Friday, every third Saturday & every third holiday, and no Sundays. Hours vary, but are generally 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. We offer a friendly and exciting work environment and benefits, including dental, medical, vision, RRSP, and life insurance. Starting wage is $7.75 with an increase to $8.25 after 3 months if performance is satisfactory.

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Email: arielle@rosaflora.com **Fax:** 905-774-2818
Web: www.rosaflora.com
Rosa Flora Limited, 756 Diltz Road, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2
No phone calls, please.

Event

Immanuel Christian School of **Oshawa**, Ontario hopes to celebrate its **40th Anniversary** the weekend of October 18th, 19th and 20th. All former and present students, teachers, parents, and friends are invited to help us celebrate God's faithfulness. For more information contact **Trudy Bouma at (905) 623-1103** phone/fax, or e-mail: **r.bouma@sympatico.ca**

Volunteers Needed

Brain Injury Community Re-entry Drivers needed for the Ontario region: provide rides for medical appointments and social outings. Mileage is compensated. Contact **Pauline** at **905-687-6788 ext. 113.**

Job Opportunity

Zion Christian Reformed Church in **Oshawa**, Ontario, is seeking a **part-time worship co-ordinator**, 20 -25 hours per week. The position starts in Sep/Oct. 2002. For full details, contact Aileen at **905-436-3255** or email: **zioncrc@planeteer.com**

Miscellaneous

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To advertise your business or to place a family ad, just call our toll-free number: 1-800-969-4838.

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Aug 24	**Clinton** & District Christian School **40th year reunion**. For information on events, call 519-482-7851.
Sep 18	**Classis Niagara** meeting 4p.m. at Providence CRC, **Beamsville, Ont**. See ad this issue for details.
Oct 5,6	Bethel CRC of **Saskatoon, Saskatchewan** 50th anniversary. Contact Betty Veltkamp, 302-510th Av N. Saskatoon, SK S7K 2R2 or email: bveltkamp@sasktel.net
Oct.18,19,20	Immanuel Christian School, **Oshawa**, Ont. **40th Anniversary**. For event info, contact Trudy Bouma at 905-623-1103 or email: r.bouma@sympatico.ca
Oct 19,20	First CRC of **Chilliwack B.C. 50th** anniversary. For info & billeting: call Erna Maarhuis 604-794-7140 or e-mail: pjonda@telus.net
Oct.26	**CLAC 50th Anniversary Celebration**. Dr. Calvin Seerveld keynote speaker, **Hamilton** District Christian High. For further information, call Pauline at 905-945-1500.
Nov.1	**Christian Festival Concert** under the direction of Leendart Kooij in Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto** $28/$21/$16. Call **416-636-9779.**

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is a vibrant congregation in **Mississauga**, a suburban area west of Toronto. In addition to our regular programs, we have also launched both Alpha and Network in the last year. So that we might better accommodate our various ministries, we have recently voted to relocate to new and expanded facilities. Currently we have **4 part-time staff positions** open in the areas of:

- Youth Ministry,
- Outreach Ministry,
- Volunteer/Ministry Coordinator
- Worship Coordinator.

These encompass 4 of the 6 strategic priorities in our church's Long Range Plan. While each position represents up to 20-25 hours/week, with the right skill/gift match, we are very receptive to combining two of these openings into a full-time position.

If you have a deep love for the Lord, have gifts and a passion for service in any of these areas, coupled with a demonstrated ability to work in a team environment, we would like to hear from you. An ability to preach occasionally would also be an asset.

Please direct inquiries and résumés to:

Clarkson Christian Reformed Church
1880 Lakeshore Road West
Mississauga, Ontario L5J 1J8
ATTENTION: Ministry Staffing
E mail: mail@clarksoncrc.on.ca

For a closer look at our church, surf over to our Web site at **www.clarksoncrc.on.ca**

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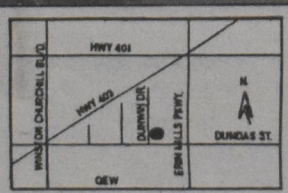

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News

Hundreds of Sudanese slaves freed

SUDAN (Religion Today) — Approximately 4,735 Black Sudanese slaves were redeemed by Christian Solidarity International (CSI) during a 12-day visit to Sudan ending July 6, according to a press release from the organization.

The overwhelming majority of the redeemed slaves — mostly women and children — were captured over the past two decades by the armed forces of the Government of Sudan and allied Arab militias during raids against Black non-Muslim communities in Southern Sudan.

COURTESY OF CROSSROADS: LEE ABSALOM PHOTO

Former Sudanese slave waiting to be freed by Western negotiators in 1997. Slave redemptions are continuing, according to Christian Solidarity International.

Sudan's 'Underground Railroad'

The redeemed slaves were liberated from bondage in Northern Sudan and were returned to their homeland in the South through Sudan's 'Underground Railroad' — a local peace and reconciliation endeavor of Sudanese civil society involving Arabs, Black Africans and CSI. Nine networks of Arab retrievers were involved in the redemption of these slaves in six locations. Representatives of local Arab-Black African peace committees reported that several thousand additional slaves were freed since last spring, without payment of compensation, through a new CSI-supported branch of the 'Underground Railroad'.

Extensive interviews conducted by CSI with freed slaves confirm a clear pattern of physical and psychological torture. Sexual abuse of women and children is rampant. The majority of women and older girls were gang-raped at the time of their capture and subsequently served their masters as concubines. Boys claimed to have been sodomized. Forced labor, beatings, death threats, racial and religious insults and forced conversion to Islam are also characteristic of slavery in Sudan.

FAITH IN ACTION

An impoverished mother and child in Sudan.

Post told a different story

Several weeks ago the *Washington Post* published a story claiming that black Sudanese community leaders were defrauding the human-rights organization Christian Solidarity International by elaborately stage-managing slave-redemption scenes, involving tens of thousands of false slaves and scores of false Arab retrievers. Dan Rather repeated the claims on 60 Minutes.

An article in the *National Review* by Charles Jacobs, president of the American Anti-Slavery Group, pointed out that the *Post* "never witnessed any slave-redemption activity, never interviewed any redeemed slaves or slave retrievers, or any of the community leaders in Sudan but that it suppressed or ignored an abundance of credible evidence, from eyewitnesses and other sources, that confirm the validity of CSI's slave-liberation program — including numerous filmed interviews by visiting journalists...." The *Post* "turned down invitations to observe the Sudanese Underground Railroad in operation...and relied almost exclusively on remote sources who never witnessed CSI activity, but who had political axes to grind against the local leadership in the province most affected by slave-raiding."

At the end of May, Freedom House (a social justice agency based in Washington, D.C.) published the findings of a major fact finding mission to Sudan that confirmed the issue of slavery, abductions, and forced servitude in the war-ravaged country. It confirms the existence of slavery in Sudan, a practice used in conjunction with attacks carried out against civilian populations in rebel-held areas by pro-government militias.

"This report definitively establishes that the Sudanese regime is condoning the practice of slavery," said Nina Shea, director of Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom. "It makes it all the more imperative that the U.S. assume a central role in negotiating a just peace that adequately protects the rights of the beleaguered animist and Christian populations in the south of Sudan," she said.

Its deadliest phase

Meanwhile, Mission Network News reports that there are fears that Sudan's civil war has recently reached its deadliest phase. Civilian targets were hit in July by the Khartoum government, resulting in more casualties. The conditions have deteriorated to where security is despaired of by human rights groups.

Situation extremely unstable

Voice of the Martyrs' Todd Nettleton said: "We're very concerned about the situation in south Sudan, particularly for the Christians there and for our workers, and other aid workers who are there. The situation right now is extremely unstable, and, in spite of all the good talk that we've heard from the government in northern Sudan, good action has not followed."

Nettleton said that despite the danger, they have not abandoned their project. "I think we definitely still choose to stand with the Christians in south Sudan who are being persecuted for their faith. Some of the changes we've made will enable us to stay focused on the Christians who are persecuted. Some of the things that we were formerly doing, we have turned over to the Sudanese people," he added.

(Sources: Religion Today, Mission Network News, National Review, and Freedom House)

Check out *Christian Courier*'s new website: www.christian courier.ca

News Digest

The croc's in the mail

FREDERICTON, N.B. (CP) – There's nothing like a cramped flight in economy class to wipe the smile off a crocodile's face.

Officials with the Canadian Wildlife Service are investigating how an endangered Cuban crocodile was shipped by air cargo to the agency's office in Sackville, N.B. from Edmonton in June. CWS's Guy Lafranchise told CP the crocodile was not very happy when it was freed from its small cramped crate. "He was very aggressive. Would you be in a good mood if you traveled across Canada in a box?" Fortunately, the reptile suffered no injuries.

Lafranchise says CWS received a fax from a John Doe asking the agency to find the croc a good home. It is now living in a large aquarium in a reptile zoo in Campbellton, N.B.

Otters with accents

SCOTLAND — Two Canadian otters at a sanctuary in Scotland have been placed under 24-hour protection from aggressive local otters who are confused by their "foreign accents," Reuters reports.

"Dialects are common in animal communications, but because of the differences in the sounds they make it will be difficult for these Canadian otters to communicate with the native ones," says Matthew Evans, an animal communications expert from Stirling University. "There is no doubt dropping two foreign otters into a territory of wild locals would lead to the local ones beating the living daylights out of the new ones."

Telephone tooth

LONDON, England (AP) – Tired of losing your cell phone? Then why not get a "molar mobile"? That's what two British inventors are calling a phone that can be installed in a tooth.

Theoretically, the device could allow spies to receive instructions secretly, or athletes to hear from their coaches while on the field. Users would keep a tiny device outside the body to turn the cell phone on and off and to program it.

The molar mobile can receive phone calls, listen to music, and even connect to verbal Internet sites without anyone else hearing. But users can't return phone calls with the device. Recently at a London museum, people lined up to try the device, and reacted with fascination, and fear of the dentist.